

God Revealed through the Church

The Church - A Demonstration of Godly Warfare

Wars have raged on in every corner of our planet ever since the beginning of time. Some wars are politically motivated, others religiously motivated, and others for plain selfish gain. Whatever the motivation for war there are always casualties. It is unfortunate that the Christians had their so-called holy war – the Crusades – against the Muslims. The Muslims have their so-called holy wars called jihad. But is this what spiritual warfare is all about? Is there such a thing as “godly warfare”? Whether we like it or not we are in a battle – a spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6: 10 – 20

1) Our Enemy

- In order to engage in godly warfare that results in the glory of God and not the destruction of people we need to know who our enemy is.
- Firstly we need to understand that our enemy is not primarily people
 - We are told to put on the full armour of God to take our stand against the devil’s schemes
 - Our primary enemy is the devil – the rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
 - Our primary enemy is not people but Satan who is the spirit influencing their actions
 - When Jesus looked at Peter and told Satan to get behind him He recognised the walk of Satan using Peter to try and distract Him from fulfilling God’s purpose of the cross
- We normally think of heaven as a peaceful place but there has been a great war in heaven.
 - Rev 12: 7 – 9 “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”
- Satan is God’s arch enemy and tried to rise up against God but, being a created being lost the battle against God – the Almighty. If he cannot defeat God he then went after what was precious to God – man.
 - His first scheme against man was in the Garden of Eden where he used deceit to make them disobey God and brought sin into the whole human race.
 - 1 Peter 5: 8 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”
 - Dean Sherman writes in his book “Spiritual Warfare”: “Satan roars and we jump. He roars and we get angry. He roars and we lust. He roars and we get depressed. He roars and we become rebellious. Are we guided by the roar of the lion or by God? We change jobs because we need more money. We marry because we’re lonely. We move because we want a bigger house to make room for more things. We leave churches because we get angry and fed up, or because we doubt that it will ever improve. Where is the voice of God in these decisions?”
- We will have a look at the devil’s schemes and the armour that confronts those schemes

2) Our Armour

- The Chinese Christian, Watchman Nee, wrote a book called “Sit, Walk, Stand” as a commentary on Ephesians. He refers to our position in Christ as being seated in Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2: 6). Then we are to walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4: 1). Then we are to stand against the devil’s schemes
 - Without knowing our position in Christ we will not know what authority we have in this spiritual warfare that we are in.
 - In fact if we have not been born again and are not seated in Christ in the heavenly places then we are still under the dominion of darkness and have no authority over the dominion of darkness at all.
 - If we are seated in Christ yet walk – live – in a manner unworthy of Christ then we lose all authority against the powers of darkness coming at us.

- We have authority against the schemes of the devil when our position in Christ and our walking are right before God
- There is a double emphasis on putting on the full armour of God to stand your ground.
 - Firstly by putting on the full armour of God it is both defensive and attacking armour
 - Example of defensive armour is the breastplate
 - Example of attacking armour is the sword
 - Secondly by standing your ground the Christian isn't called to merely "hold the fort" but rather the meaning is that after you have done everything and are victorious over the enemy then stand as victors on the battleground.
 - Matthew 16: 18 – 19 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven
 - This speaks about a church advancing against the gates of hell and not merely holding its ground.
 - But be aware of pride as all our victories are only in Christ and not ourselves.
- Our armour and the devil's schemes
 - The belt of truth
 - Jesus referred to the devil as "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8: 44)
 - At times Satan blatantly lies and at other times he twists the truth.
 - A twist of the truth is worse than a blatant lie as the Word of God is used and it seems so right.
 - Satan used this in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve.
 - He used it against Jesus in the wilderness.
 - We need to counter lies with truth.
 - If we do not have a thorough understanding of the truth of God's Word and how it applies to our lives Satan can easily mislead us.
 - The breastplate of righteousness
 - The breastplate covered the body from the neck to the thighs. It was in two parts – one covering the front and one covering the back.
 - Righteousness would refer to integrity of life and character
 - A scheme of Satan would be to look for a flaw in our character and tempt us in that area until we sin.
 - If a person has a weakness for alcohol then Satan will work on that weakness. When the person has a drink it creates a gap in the breastplate and gives the devil a foothold into the person's life.
 - If we know that we have a weakness in our lives or are still practising sin then we need to repent and turn from it to close those gaps in our breastplate.
 - Satan tried to tempt Job but it was his integrity that withstood the onslaught of the devil.
 - Feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace
 - The Gospel is the very foundation on which every Christian stands. If we do not stand on the Gospel as the foundation of our lives we will fall for anything.
 - We ought to have an attitude of readiness to walk in the Gospel of peace
 - The Gospel of peace that reconciled us with God and with others
 - Satan uses the strategy of divide and conquer. If he can get us being angry and bitter towards others then he has succeeded in moving us away from the Gospel and peace and is victorious.
 - When we refuse to separate and remain angry and bitter towards others but walk in the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness then we are victorious.
 - The shield of faith
 - The Romans used their shields to form an impenetrable wall that stopped all the arrows that were shot at them.
 - This also reveals the importance of standing side by side in unity in this battle.
 - The arrows were set on fire and would set everything on fire that they hit.

- Satan – the evil one – shoots his fiery arrows of doubt and despair, wickedness and blasphemy, and everything that would cause us to turn from what is right in God’s sight to wickedness – subtle as well as blatant.
- Our faith – unwavering trust in our Faithful God – extinguishes all those flaming arrows
- Isaiah 7: 9 “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all”
- The helmet of salvation
 - Our mind is the first strategic area of the battlefield
 - Even though we are saved our minds needs to be renewed and we often think as the world thinks.
 - Satan will keep Christians carnal and worldly by keeping them thinking according to the way of the world.
 - If he can do that he does not need to fear the church.
 - We need to keep the hope of salvation in our minds and start thinking the thoughts of God.
 - We cannot measure spiritual force by rules of philosophy or definitions of theology any more than by a carpenter’s rule or chemist’s scales. It is “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And yet, the character of a man’s thoughts has much to do with success or failure in the spiritual life. He is influenced by what he thinks. T. Henry Howard
 - Philippians. 4: 8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things”

3) Our Weapons

- 2 Corinthians 10: 3 – 5 “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We 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.”
- The Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God
 - Hebrews 4: 12 “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”
 - 2 Timothy 2: 15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”
 - Jesus used the word of God when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness.
 - We also need to know how to correctly handle the word of truth
 - When a situation arises do we know which verses to apply to the particular situation?
 - John 14: 26 “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”
 - The Holy Spirit will remind you of what Jesus has taught us.
 - We need to sit down and study His Word so that when a situation arises that we need to use the Word the Holy Spirit will bring to our mind the Word that is already within us.
 - When the devil misquoted the scriptures to Jesus Jesus had the scriptures on His lips ready to quote scripture correctly back at the devil thus defeating him.
 - Many Christians are shaken when people quote scripture because they aren’t familiar enough with the Word of God to know if it is true or not.
 - How can the Word of God be a sword that cuts down the devil’s activities in peoples’ lives and attempts on our own lives if we do not have it in our hearts, our hands and in our mouths?
 - The tongue is another major battlefield that Satan delights in because he knows that so few people can control it.
 - We cannot have the Word of God and gossip, slander, malicious talk, coarse joking, swearing and other bad talk on our tongues at the same time.
 - The Word of God breaks down the wiles of the devil and builds people up.
 - Satan’s biggest hold on people are lies. If he can get you to believe his lies about you he will destroy you.
 - Our greatest weapon against these lies is the truth of the Word of God. That is why I always get people to believe the truth of God Word before praying for them for issues in their lives.

- Prayer in the Holy Spirit
 - Romans 8: 26 – 27 “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”
 - We are called to pray in the Spirit on all occasions
 - On all occasions means at our normal times and in times of great distress and temptation.
 - We need to be alert to when and what God is prompting us to pray. There are many examples of people waking up in the night with a deep sense of burden for someone or some place and have got up to pray. They have discovered, sometimes years later, that someone went through a particularly distressing time at that moment.
 - We are called to prayer with all kinds of prayers and requests.
 - Prayers of thanksgiving and praise as in the case of Jehoshaphat
 - Prayers of supplication – requests
 - Intercessory prayer – God is calling us, His Church, to stand in the gap for a lost world
 - Ezekiel 22: 30 “I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none”
 - Prayer of proclamation – proclaiming the gospel in prayer that the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 3: 10)
 - We need to be alert in prayer so that we don't fall into temptation
 - Matthew 26: 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”
 - Who should we pray for?
 - All the saints
 - For those ministering God's word – locally, nationally, internationally
 - For the fearless proclamation of the Gospel
 - For those who persecute you (Matthew 5: 44)
 - For the children (Matthew 19: 13)
 - For leaders and governing authorities (1 Timothy 2: 1 – 2)
 - Kneel before God and you will be able to stand before anyone