

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

January 2020

Most of us in the body of Christ know who we are fighting in the spirit realm. Whether we call him the devil, Satan, or the evil one, he is the enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ and of our own souls. What many of us don't know is where and how he strikes. We don't know his tactics. We don't know the spirit realm in which he operates. But, if we are going to defeat him, we need to know where and how the enemy works. If I've learned anything both outside, and even more so now on the inside of these prison walls, is what we as believers are dealing with.

When Joshua began his campaign to conquer the Promise Land and faced the formidable wall of Jericho, Jesus appeared to him and said, *When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"* ^{v14} *And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come."* *And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"* ^{v15} *And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy."* ^{v1} *And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. (Joshua 5:13-6:1 ESV).*

Then Jesus gave him explicit instructions about how to take the city, which was heavily fortified: *And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.* ^{v3} *You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days.* ^{v4} *Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.* ^{v5} *And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him." (Joshua 6:2-5 ESV).*

The Bible records that when Joshua did exactly as Jesus commanded, the wall of Jericho fell down flat and the city was Israel's. Thank God, Jesus is our Captain too! He knows how to gain the victory over all the demons because He crushed them at the resurrection. Earlier, in the book of Ephesians, Paul declared that Jesus overcame death and was raised and seated "*far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named.*" He is the warrior who defeated all enemies and "*put all things under his feet.*" (*Ephesians 1:19-22*).

Jesus revealed to Joshua that Jericho would be his and when the wall came down, and Joshua understood that the wall was merely the key that unlocked the city. Let me tell you two things about your problems and the challenges that stand between you and the promises of God that are yours.

First, your promise is locked up behind a problem. A problem is nothing but a door to a promise. Don't allow the problem to intimidate you from getting the promise! The promise is yours to possess. It's simply trapped behind a wall like Jericho, and Jesus is your wall-toppling Captain!

Second, you must fight when Jesus tells you how to unlock the promise. He knows it and you need to recognize it. You need to know that the fight will take place and you have no need to fear. How can you know you are about to engage in a struggle and not be afraid? Because your faith is in Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God! *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3 ESV).*

God is saying to us that everything we call physical was manifested from something spiritual. We also understand that the spiritual reality becomes physical reality as the Word of God is spoken in faith. The promises of God are ours the moment we believe them in our hearts and then confess them in faith. Jesus declared this principle of the Kingdom of God. *And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ^{v23} Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ^{v24} Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:22-24 ESV).*

Right now, we must recognize that we live simultaneously in two spheres of existence – the spiritual realm and the natural realm – and our enemy is in the spiritual realm. The spiritual realm is the “parent” realm from which everything natural is given birth. The natural realm is an outworking of the spiritual realm. Therefore, if we are to be successful in defeating the enemy, we must defeat him in the spiritual realm. Then, the natural realm will fall in line with what has been accomplished in the Spirit.

At every moment and in every situation, Jesus knows where the enemy is and what he’s doing to try to wreck-havoc in the body of Christ. Our challenge is to follow Jesus in the Spirit and stop the devil before he even get started. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ^{v12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12 ESV).*

Our bridegroom is issuing a battle cry to His Warrior Bride, and that cry is not against people, but against spiritual evil. One thing we must always remember about spiritual warfare is that our battle is against the enemy of our souls, Satan and his demonic forces. We are never against people, particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ. Although the enemy may manifest himself through human beings, our warfare is against the principalities, the powers and the rulers of darkness that are causing evil behavior.

Believers are in a deadly wrestling match with these things. Principalities is the Greek word *archas*, which means rulers and authorities, in this context speaking of the demonic realm. “Bauer’s” Lexicon states that this term points to the existence of a political organization in the demonic realm, a hierarchy of ranking demons who have authority over territories.

“Powers” is translated *exousia*. While this word is used in Scripture for ability, it most often implies authority. Paul is telling us that with in the political hierarchy of demonic beings, some have authority over others. Then we have the “rulers” *kosmoscrators*, who are literally world rulers of this darkness. The text here is not referring to government officials, kings or dictators. This passage peers into the spiritual realm where these rulers preside over the “darkness of this world” in Satan’s kingdom. You might call these evil territorial spirits.

This evil hierarchy makes life miserable on planet Earth. No matter what people do to us, we must be mindful that they are not our enemy, and we are never to seek revenge or restitution. We are to forgive our offenders, turn them over to God, and look to him for justice and mercy. Throughout the Scriptures we find admonitions that our battle belongs to God and that He alone exacts vengeance: *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19 ESV). For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ^{v31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:30-31 ESV).*

So how do we battle when people hurt and wound us and defraud us, and seek to destroy us in some way? The wiles of the devil are mental attacks. He assaults our minds with evil, deceptive thoughts and counts on the fact that we will believe these to be our thoughts and we will accept them as truth. Primarily, our battle is fought in the mind.

The Greek word “wiles” is *methodias*, which means “trickery”. This word covers evil thinking, evil strategies and evil motivations. Because Satan was utterly defeated and rendered powerless at the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he must persuade us that he has power and deceive us into seeing and doing things his way, therefore, in order to control our wills, he and his demons direct their trickery toward our minds.

The devil seeks to turn us against people while he hides in the shadows of deception. You've probably experienced this many times, usually without knowing it. You're troubled about something, and you don't even know what it is. You'll daydream off into an entire thought process that will convince you of who your problem is, and you become obsessed with eradicating the problem.

In reality, you're not fighting with flesh and blood but with demons of restlessness and fear and other things that are making you believe lies to get you to abort God's will for your life. If you don't stop those thoughts dead in their tracks and cast down the vain imaginations, you will do something completely contrary to God's will and plan for your life. You will hurt yourself and others.

What will keep you straight and focused in spiritual warfare is to remember at all times that people are not your enemy. Your battle is with Satan and his demonic forces. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ^{v12} *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12 ESV).*

Have you watched WWE lately? When they wrestle, their bodies are pressed against one another. All their strength and knowledge of the sport is concentrated on pinning their opponents so they cannot move and are rendered powerless. When the apostle Paul spoke of wrestling to the Ephesians, however, he described a hand-to-hand, face-to-face combat that proved to be a brutal end for the loser. In the Roman empire, the loser had his eyes gouged out! By using this word Paul is clearly saying, "You've got to know what you're doing because you cannot lose this battle!" We are in a wrestling match with the enemy whose intent is to steal, kill and destroy us (John 10:10).

We need to know that the devil is not impulsive in his attacks against us. *Methodrias* means he develops strategies, plans and schemes. He calculates his moves, anticipates our counter moves, and waits patiently, like the snake he is, to strike us at our weakest moment. That is why it always seems he attacks us when we're down. He attacks when he feels it will have maximum impact. He wants to stop us dead in our tracks. He wants our vehicles to run out of fuel, our soldiers to run out of resolve, our weapons to run out of ammunition and our faith to fizzle out.

Yes, we have been given authority over Satan and his demonic evil cohorts through the name and the blood of Jesus Christ, but we must never underestimate their cunning craftiness and trickery. They've been around a lot longer than we have and are a lot smarter than we are! Our natural understanding, therefore, is worthless against their knowledge and ability. That is why we must put on the armor of God and stand in the strength of the Lord. We cannot fight and win a spiritual war on our own strength or understanding. We must have the mind and might of Christ.

So many in the body of Christ live in a terrible state of confusion and difficulty simply because they do not take every thought captive and line up there thinking with the word of God. Paul strongly admonishes us in his second letter to the Corinthians: *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.* ^{v4} *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* ^{v5} *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ESV).*

Christians are having nervous breakdowns, stress attacks, and losing their minds because Satan sends demons to attack them in their thought life and they do not cast down those imaginations that are against God and His Word. Husbands are leaving their wives or vice versa and they still don't know why. They just say, "I got to go, I still love you. It's not that I don't love you. I'll send you money. No there's nobody else, I just got to go." Well what's sending you? "I don't know, I got to go."

Somewhere else a woman has fallen in love with another man and she's out of control. She doesn't even know why she loves him. He's not somebody that she would be attracted to. She doesn't like anybody that looks like him. But she thinks about him so much she's dreaming about him.

Evil spirits are planting thoughts in our minds that are not our thoughts, and we must cast them down. For example, today with the mass shootings in schools and churches, many parents are frightened for their children. This is just what the devil wants! He wants us to be tormented and fearful because then our faith is made completely ineffective. We are now the ones who are hiding in corners just trying to survive when we should be out messing up every tactic of the enemy.

If our children get sent off to school and suddenly our heart jumps in our throat because a picture of them being gunned down races to our minds – that is demonic, and we must immediately submit our minds to God’s word and drive that mental image out with “My children are taught of the Lord and great is their peace and undisturbed composure. I plead the blood of Jesus over my children, and Satan you have no right to hurt them or harm them in any way. I take authority over you through the name and the blood of Jesus Christ and declare any strategies or attacks you have planned for my children are made null and void this day and forever.” And we do battle in the Spirit until the Holy Spirit floods our hearts again with the peace that possesses all understanding.

If we think any thought that is contrary to what God says in His Word – no matter how pleasant it is – we must put it down also. In most cases, the devil will introduce a thought pattern that is not terrifying, but very comfortable and pleasing, something that strokes our flesh and makes our ego tingle with excitement. But we must fight as hard as we fought for our children! We must submit ourselves immediately to God and His Word, resist the devil, and cause him to flee! *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7 ESV)*. It’s a fight to hold our homes together, especially from in here (incarceration). It’s a fight to walk in love towards other inmates and make war against evil spirits instead of satisfying our flesh by seeking revenge. And sometimes it’s a fight just to get out of bed in the morning.

Our fight is in the supernatural realm, but the church has become so worldly that the minute someone has a problem, we automatically respond, “they need some counseling.” We want to sit down and use our human understanding to solve problems that are spiritual. We’ll often judge the oppressed person because we’re so smart! The fact is we are totally ignorant of the reality of spiritual matters and walk in the futility of our intellect. Many of those with problems need *deliverance from* them not *counseling about* them. Others need to learn to fight spiritual battles and win them. Still others need to be encouraged in their spiritual battle to stand strong until the victory comes.

Just a generation ago, there were those in the church you didn’t “counsel” anybody. They put a person on the altar! They would plead the blood of Jesus over that person and begin calling on His name. They didn’t know much Greek or Hebrew and they hadn’t studied theology or church history, but they would call on His name and plead the blood. And when they did, the power of God would break through in that person’s life and freedom would burst forth. They knew their real enemy was, so oppressive evil was set to flight and lives were changed. Our fathers and mothers of the faith knew how to wrestle the enemy to the ground in the spirit realm.

The revelation the Holy Spirit wants to give us in these verses of Scripture is that we are fighting a very organized and intelligent horde of evil beings. They have studied humans for thousands of years. They worked on our fathers and mothers, our grandfathers and grandmothers, all the way back to Adam and Eve. They knew every weakness, every strength and how to turn them all against us. But God has given us a powerful and mighty redemption from this evil: Our hope and assurance of victory is to walk this earth in Christ, stay suited up in the armor of God, and refused to back down from what God has promised in His Word. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13 KJV)*.

Paul says “wherefore” because you are fighting against spiritual wickedness, you are to “take unto you the whole armor of God.” The Greek language used for “take unto you” gives us great insight into the seriousness of Paul’s admonition. “Take unto you” is like a military command that is to be obeyed immediately and for all time. You are to put on God’s armor right now and never even consider taking it off. You are to maintain discipline over your flesh and keep your spirit alert so that the Holy Spirit can keep you apprised of the enemy’s movements at all times.

When we persevere in the Spirit and keep the armor of God on at all times, we will be able to “withstand in the evil day.” I have underlined that word “day” in my Bible because that says to me that the devil’s attack is only for a day! He

has a limit. He won't last if we put on our armor and fight. If we'll stand, his attack will soon be over, and he'll have to flee.

Two of the greatest wiles of the devil are discouragement and exhaustion. If all else fails, he will simply come at us again and again and again to wear us down and get us to quit. When Jesus was in the wilderness and Satan tempted him, He stood against the devil with the Word of God until the devil simply couldn't stay any longer. The Bible says, *"Then the devil left Him."* (Matthew 4:11) His time was up, Jesus outlasted him and he had to go.

Today, we don't see Joshua and the children of Israel still circling the wall of Jericho! No! They had a certain number of times and then their shout of victory brought the wall to the ground. So be encouraged as this New Year begins! The evil coming against you only has a "day"! If you keep standing, his day will soon be over. Whatever is coming against you in the spirit realm isn't permanent. It isn't going to last that long – not if you'll keep God's armor on and stand. Maybe the sun is already setting, the day is nearly over, and evil is about to flee into the night. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* (Galatians 6:9 KJV).

How many believers have not possessed the promises and blessings of God purely because they get tired of the struggle and quit just moments before all was theirs? How many were inches away from conquering their land and they drop their sword and their shield to the ground? That makes my body shutter! What would've happened if Joshua had quit before the seventh time around the wall of Jericho? What would've happened if he gave up before the shout?

Oh God, help us to stop running on our own strength and be endued with Yours, to listen to the voice of our Captain and follow His battle plan, to keep our armor on at all times, and when we've done all, to continue resisting the discouraging wiles of the devil until the victory is manifested.

When we know our enemy, understand his tactics, stay suited in the whole armor of God, and refuse to budge from His perfect will for our lives, we can defeat the enemy and keep him defeated. We can love people, hate evil, and stay focused on the prize until it is ours.

Stay suited! Stay in the Word!

Let this be a great year in Christ!

Chief

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Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon