



SPIRITUAL WARFARE (cont.)

The Church and Spiritual Warfare

I hope this is a rewarding time in God's Word and spurs you on. Now, we are about to do Secret Church rapid fire. So, this is – I'll be honest, this is like my totally favorite side as a pastor at 11:15, to see a roomful of people for the next hour, Bibles open, past midnight, diving into the Word. Follow along. If you need to, feel free to stand up. Spiritual warfare.

So, here's what we're going to do. We're going to get this picture of – I'm going to show you the armor of God. We're going to fly through that, and then get to these questions at the end, and then to those two concluding challenges. So here we go. You ready?

Engagement in warfare...

Engagement in warfare. What we've got here in Ephesians 6 is a picture of the armor of God, and what Paul is calling us to do is to respond. Remember, two actions. Stand firm; press forward. Defensive; offensive. We've got to respond urgently. First, we've got to respond urgently. We're living in evil days. This is not time to sit back and relax. We must respond consciously. Stand firm is a command. Do this. You can't dismiss yourself from this battle. We must respond vigorously and corporately. It's interesting. Ephesians 6, these commands, this armor, it's all given in the plural. It's given to the church, not individuals fighting different battles. It's a church fighting the battle together. It's a community. We must respond specifically. How?

Weapons for warfare...

This is where we come to these weapons for warfare, the armor of God. Now, we've got to be really careful when we come to the armor of God not to over-interpret this metaphor and not to just go off on all kinds of random stuff about this piece of the armor doing this on this soldier, and so that's what this means when it comes to righteousness. We've got to be really careful there. The belt of truth, it's important because it holds up your pants. So, truth holds up your pants. Unfortunately, Paul forgot to mention that we need to wear pants. So – it's not even mentioned in there. So, don't take the analogy too far, okay? Don't over interpret this picture.

The armor of God is fundamentally a reflection of the character of God. This is part of the reason you're hearing from me a pretty strong stand against some of the formulaic nature of spiritual warfare today, because spiritual warfare in Scripture is not primarily about technique but character. It's almost like the way we've handled spiritual warfare. We've said, "It's not enough to be clothed in the armor and the character of God. Instead you need to speak certain formulas and confront and command and cast out, verbally spar with evil spirits." I hear folks I respect talk about this a lot, but the implication is if you're not doing that kind of warfare, you're not really involved in spiritual warfare. That's not the case. If that were the case, then why don't we see biblical admonitions like that all over the New Testament? We don't. Instead, we see Christians going in the character of God. If we have to worry about technique, then why doesn't the New Testament spell out techniques like that? It doesn't for a reason. We need to appropriate the character of God. Isaiah 11, you see this picture of reflecting the character of God. It's reflected in the armor. William

Gurnall said, "We must not confide in the armor of God but in the God of this armor because all of our weapons are only mighty through God."

So, the armor is a reflection of His character and a demonstration of His power. Paul is writing to people who are used to seeking power in gods or spirits, and he says, "There's a new source of power here in Christ," Ephesians 4. There's a new means of power. It's not magical formulas or manipulating God to do this or that. Instead, you experience His power through His spirit as you commune with Him and a new purpose for power. You're not using power in the spiritual world to advance yourself or inflict harm on others but to sacrifice yourself in love for one another, Ephesians 5.

The Belt of Truth

So, what I want us to do is I want us to walk through, pretty briskly, the different pieces of armor. I think the focus is less on the actual objects: belt, breastplate, this or that, and it is on the character and the power of God that is represented in these things. So, the belt of truth. The belt of truth. What does that mean for Paul? I think fundamentally, throughout Paul's writings, including here, truth – we need, in spiritual warfare, a true understanding of who Christ is. Who Christ is. One of Satan's key strategies is corrupting and distorting our understanding of Christ. I'm convinced this is one of the biggest, most overlooked aspects of spiritual warfare in contemporary literature today, because we think that what we think about Christ doesn't really affect some of the details of our lives. That's why, in our church culture today, you are engulfed in all kinds of tips on how to manage your money better and how to do this or that better and avoid stress and this or that. You're not hearing doctrine about who Christ is because we don't think it connects, and it does.

What we believe about Christ and who Christ is and our knowledge of Christ has everything to do with how we will live at work, at home, at play, at school, everything. It's driven by a true understanding of who Christ is, and Paul was after this. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Don't miss this. You go to 2 Corinthians 11:4. We don't have time to do that tonight, but Paul is confronting some teachers who were talking about and preaching a Jesus other than the one He had preached to them. That's who He's confronting here, and it says, *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."* Listen to how Paul defines strongholds, *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ."* So, when Paul starts talking about strongholds, this is one of the most widely quoted versus in all the spiritual warfare literature that's out there.

This imagery of stronghold is used to refer to all kinds of sinful habits that people have, strongholds in their lives that they need to gain victory over. So, people will speak to this or that stronghold in our lives. Some even use this word "stronghold" to refer to a city, a region or country where there's not much response to the gospel. "There are strongholds there," but that is not what Paul is talking about here. When Paul talks about stronghold, he is specifically addressing false teachings about Christ that were setting themselves up against the knowledge of God.

Strongholds are not these sins that take over here or there. Strongholds are teachings about Christ that need to be shot down by the truth of God's Word. Teachings like Jesus is not fully man. Very prevalent in New Testament days, first century. 1 John is addressing that. Others claiming Jesus is not fully God. Colossians 2 is addressing Ebionites who were denying the deity of Christ. Jesus is not superior, Hebrews 1, addressing limitations that people were putting on the glory of Christ. Jesus is not sufficient. This is what Paul is addressing in Colossians 2, that Jesus is not sufficient. He's more along the lines of angels.

This is what we see in the cults: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, even in the popular Jesus Seminar that's all over, "New Historical Jesus Studies." It's all devaluing the person of Christ and its false teachings about who Christ is. Those are strongholds that need to be taken down, and spiritual warfare is preaching truth against falsehood, to take down false ideas about Christ.

Now, all this other stuff that we equate with strongholds, that's not what Scripture is talking about. Now, even if we say, "Okay, well, I believe Jesus is fully God, fully man, those things," I think we need to beware of other subtle distortions. One is – we've talked about one of Satan's key strategies is deception, and there are all kinds of ideas about Jesus that are out there today that are subtle. Jesus without a body, meaning Jesus disconnected from the body of Christ. Christian individualists everywhere who feel absolutely no need in their relationship with Christ to be connected to His body and the Church. Jesus who is far away. Many people think Jesus is remote from the problems they're walking through everyday. Healthy, wealthy Jesus who wants us to sit back and enjoy all this life has to offer. That is not a biblical picture. Jesus is my pal. Jesus is a cool friend who makes me feel good about myself. We miss out on the worth of His transcendence in glory and power.

Jesus who did not suffer. There's a whole segment of Christianity today that thinks all suffering is from the devil, and even if we wouldn't say that, a whole segment of comfortable, complacent Christianity who think that Jesus is the key to a nice, middle-class, American Christian lifestyle. Jesus with no mission. People who believe that Jesus has just called us to sit back and enjoy grace, not proclaim grace to the ends of the earth. Jesus with no heart. Jesus who is fine with the starving millions in the world and doesn't call us to do anything about it. Unforgiving Jesus: people who still think that they will pay for some of the things. "Jesus could never forgive this or that." Or on the other hand, Jesus who does not discipline. People who believe that Jesus doesn't really care that much about how much I sin. He loves me just the way I am.

Now, spiritual warfare is addressing all of these false ideas about Christ. In spiritual warfare, we have to – this is part of demolishing strongholds – beware of false doctrine. There's a great quote there from Francis Schaeffer. I would encourage you to go back and look at it because we accommodate to the culture around us, and we jeopardize truth in the process.

Beware of false doctrine. False doctrine is subtle. It is subtle, dangerously subtle. It is powerful, and false doctrine, Galatians 5, is dangerous. Paul says, "You're running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" It gets to the end, and he says, "These agitators who are teaching false doctrine, I wish they could go – they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves." Those are fighting words right there.

Demolish strongholds. Beware of satanic deception. Over and over again, we see it throughout the New Testament. Over and over again, don't be deceived. Don't be deceived. Don't be deceived. Listed three examples there.

So, a true understanding, belt of truth, a true understanding of who Christ is, and then, second, a true understanding of who we are in Christ. This is exactly what Paul is addressing, confronting in the book of Ephesians. He's saying, "From the very beginning, we, Jewish and Gentile Christians, together in this church, we have been saved by the grace of Christ. Think about who we once were." This is Ephesians 2. We were dead in sin. Dead. Not sick. Dead. In the casket. Feel the gravity of that. Dead in sin. Living in darkness. Children of disobedience captivated by sinful desire and doomed to hell. Literally objects of wrath. That's what we were.

What has he done? Ephesians 1:3-14, one of the most incredible pictures in Scripture. The Father planned our salvation before the creation of the world, before the sun was born, the moon was created or one star shined in the sky. Before a mountain appeared, or a drop of water was placed in an ocean. Before creation, the God of the universe set His affections on you. Predestined you to be adopted as His sons. The Father planned our salvation. The Son purchased our salvation, purchased in redemption through His blood, and the Spirit preserves our salvation as a deposit in us, guaranteeing our eternal inheritance.

A true understanding of who we are in Christ, what we were, what God has done and who we are now. Paul talks about how we are His body, the very body of Christ. We're His building. We're the temple. We're His bride. We are the bride of Christ. What an incredible image. Body, building, bride. We've been saved by the grace of Christ, Paul tells the church at Ephesus.

We have been filled with the power of Christ. Ephesians 1:18-23, such an incredible picture of Christ. Just put these together real quick. Don't miss this. Christ – this is what Ephesians 1:18-23 teaches - Christ has all authority. All authority. He is the risen Savior. He is the exalted King. He is seated at the right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given. Think of a title, He's got one greater. Risen Savior, exalted King, sovereign Lord. This is who Christ is, and listen to what Paul says. "God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything," not including the church, although, obviously, we are under Christ, but he says, "appointed him to be head over everything for the church," on behalf of the church. Don't miss this. Christ has all authority.

Second, the church has the fullness of Christ. Colossians 2:9 says, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ." Put those together. If Christ has all authority, and the church has the fullness of Christ, then that means all of the authority in all of the earth belongs to whom? The church. You catching this? I'm not making this stuff up. Listen to this, 1 Corinthians 3. "All are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God." All things are yours. Brothers and sisters, we are not victims of sin. We are victors over sin. We are not powerless in a pagan culture around us. We have all power over the pagan culture around us. We are not weak in spiritual warfare. We are strong.

We have all authority, and we now display the glory of Christ. Now, picture in Ephesians. Now, this is all leading up to the armor of God. We now display the glory of Christ. God's design is to use the body of His Son, the Church, to show the glory of His Son to the world. Listen to Ephesians 3, "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." Let that soak in. God shows His wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms in the picture of the Church. Just think of it. Especially when you know rulers and authorities over in Ephesians 6 is a reference to these spiritual forces of evil. This is God saying, "I'm going to redeem him and him and him and her and her, and I'm going to take them from their death and sin, and I'm going to bring them to life. I'm going to transform their hearts, and I'm going to lift them up as a display of my glory. I'm going to say to all the forces of hell, 'You want to see my goodness? See what I have done in the redemption of these people.'" This is the God who displays His glory in the heavenly realms through the church.

God's design is to use the body of His Son to show the glory of His Son to the world. God literally says, "Here, look at the Church, and you will see my Son. You'll see the glory of my Son. Look at how I've bought her, predestined her, called her, redeemed her, saved her, preserved her for all of eternity. See my glory." The belt of truth, a true understanding of

who Christ is and who we are in Christ. It involves honesty. Honesty with God, with ourselves, with others. Starting spiritual warfare. A true understanding of Christ, who He is, a true understanding of who we are in Christ.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Then, the breastplate of righteousness. This is something that is given to us. This is not self-righteousness. That's a strategy of the adversary, to convince men and women all across our culture that we can be righteous on our own.

Now, I want you to think about righteousness in Paul's writings, spiritual warfare from two angles. First, positional righteousness. Positional righteousness. This is so huge. I'm convinced that many, many Christians are weak in spiritual warfare because they are weak on this truth. I know so many people who have asked Jesus just to come into their hearts time and time and time and time again, over and over and over and over again because they don't know who they are in Christ. I want you to feel the weight, for a minute, of Colossians 1:27. Christ is in you, brother or sister. Christ is in you, the hope of glory, and what that means is we have the empowered life. These Colossian believers were being tempted to believe low things about Christ, false teachings about Christ. So, Paul gives them a picture of Jesus in Colossians 1:15-20. The image of God. The author of creation. The head of the church. The Savior of the world.

Just let this soak in. Pause for a second and realize if this Christ is anywhere near you, you're radically different. Then, the mammoth truth of Colossians 1:27 is the image of God, author of creation, head of the church and Savior of the world is living in you. He's in you. Empowered life. The exchanged life. This is the whole picture. He has taken our sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and we are now clothed in His righteousness. We have been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live. Christ lives in us. He died our death, and we now live His life. Christ is in you. This is Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret. The beauty of Christ in you. Empowered, exchanged life.

The secured life. Christ in you is the hope of glory. I want you to think about rock-solid security in the context of spiritual warfare with what Colossians is teaching here. What happened when you were saved? Let's bring in Christ. Christ came in you, and He is sealed in you. Ephesians 1:13-14, He is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. Christ is not going anywhere. Christ is in you forever, but here's the beauty. Paul doesn't just talk about how Christ is in you. He talks even more about how you are—what?—in Christ. Okay. Now, you are in Christ. So Christ is in you, and you are in Christ. Things are looking pretty secure, but the story doesn't end there. You get down to Colossians 3:3. You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ—in who?—in God. So Christ is in God. Christ is in you. You in Christ. Christ in God.

Now, do you realize what this means, brothers and sisters? If the adversary wants to come at you, then first, he has to get through God the Father, which he does not have a good track record of doing. Once he gets through God the Father, he's going to meet God the Son, the one who absolutely made a public spectacle of him at the cross. Then, just assuming he can get through God the Father and God the Son, he's still got God the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that is living in you. Here's the beauty: you have no reason to fear, Christian. You have no reason to fear anything in this life, anything in this world and anything in spiritual warfare. You are as secure as secure can get. Christ in you is the hope of glory.

Finally, the completed life, the hope of glory. "*When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory,*" (Colossians 3:4). Here's the beauty. Christ in you

now means Christ in you forever. C.S. Lewis said, "The goal toward which God is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection, and no power in the whole universe except you yourself can prevent him from taking you to that goal." So, there's positional righteousness. This is who you are in Christ, Christ in you.

Then – so let that soak in for a second. Now, practical righteousness. Live that out. Live it out. Experience the effects of that position every single day of your life. This is what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. Your old self is dead, so walk in this reality. Jesus died for you so that He might live in you. This is more than Jesus simply being your Savior, awesome as that is. Jesus is your life. Authentic spiritual transformation happens from the inside out. Jesus does not desire to improve you. Jesus desires to transform you. Christianity is nothing less than the outliving of the indwelling Christ. Christ is being formed in you. This is spiritual warfare, Christ being formed in you.

Feet Prepared with the Gospel of Peace

Strap on the breastplate of righteousness. Feet prepared with the gospel of peace. So, in the midst of this war, we have found peace with God. We fight this war proclaiming a message of peace, and we need a ready offense to accompany a staunch defense. So, we go on offense and warfare with a message of peace. We're ready at every turn to proclaim the hope that's been given to us.

Don't miss this. This is Philemon 6. Proclaiming the gospel is the best way to know the power of the gospel. Do you want to experience the power of the gospel in your life, Christian? Then give the gospel away. Be active in sharing your faith, so you'll have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Spiritual warfare involves a readiness, a willingness, an active involvement in proclaiming this gospel. This is the whole picture of Paul in Romans. It says we need to remember whose we are. We are servants of the gospel. "I'm a servant of Christ Jesus," Romans 1. We're sent out with the gospel. Talking about how he's an apostle, and we are set apart for the gospel of God. We are set apart, and we need to recognize what we believe when it comes to the gospel.

Let me ask you, Christian, if I were to ask you point blank right now at this moment to share a biblical picture of the gospel in all of its elements, would you be able to do that? Right now, would you be able to give a short, concise and thorough picture of the gospel? If we know anything well, we need to know the gospel well. We will not experience victory in spiritual warfare if we are weak on the gospel.

The gospel of peace involves the character of God, the sinfulness of man, the sufficiency of Christ. These are the five elements that I think are core to the gospel and the New Testament that we've talked about at Brook Hills. The sufficiency of Christ, the necessity of faith and the urgency of eternity. You're asking me, "What's the gospel?" The just and gracious God of the universe has looked upon hopelessly sinful man in all of his rebellion, and He has sent His Son, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection, so that everyone who believes in Him and trusts in Him can be reconciled to God forever. This is the gospel. We need to know the gospel well.

We need to know what we believe. We need to realize why we're here. *"I am obligated both of Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel,"* (Romans 1:14-15). We are here to exalt His name, and we are here to penetrate the nations. We have a responsibility to pray and a debt to pay. Obligated. *"I am in debt to Greeks and non-Greeks."* Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every lost person this side of hell. We owe the gospel. Owe the gospel.

We need to resolve how we'll live. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,"* (Romans 1:16-17). We will live like nothing can shame us. This is spiritual warfare. You want to see victory in spiritual warfare? It's living like nothing can shame us and living like nothing can stop us. Be prepared to proclaim the gospel of peace.

The Shield of Faith

Next, the shield of faith. Adversary is shooting flaming arrows at you. What are you going to do? Faith. Take up your faith in God's character. Satan will cause you to doubt, to question the character and the goodness and the greatness of God. How do you fight that? Do you say, "Demon of doubt be gone?" No. You cling to the truth of God, in Psalm 84, and you say, *"The Lord my God is a sun and shield for me."* You cling to the reality that you have a Father who gave up everything and will give you anything you need. If God is for us, who can be against us? You have faith in His character.

You have faith in God's promises. When Satan says, "You are condemned," you say, *"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because the law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death."* When Satan says, "You are alone," you say "I'm not discouraged because my God will be with me wherever I go; therefore, I do not need to fear." When you are afraid, Satan says, "You need to be afraid." Then, you say, "Fear not. God tells me, 'I have redeemed you. I've called you by name, and you are mine.'" When you pass through the waters, God will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned because He is the Lord, our God. We are precious and honored in His sight, and He loves us. He takes care of His own. You hold up the shield of faith when the devil brings flaming arrows at you. Don't start renouncing him. Just start loving the Word, and he will flee. The shield of faith promises faith in God's power. His power. God's power. 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter 5. There's no arrow aimed at you from the evil one that is above or beyond the power of God. Not one.

You have a faith that quenches flaming arrows, and these arrows are his schemes, his temptations, his lies, his deceptions, his attacks. I just put in here – this is more – just go ahead and put this out on the table. This is more personal experience about – I think we see this picture in Scripture, but I think there are ways, when we think through the arrows coming at us, when we are taking significant steps of faith, whenever you begin to press into sanctification and press through progress and sanctification, you are going to face arrows from the evil one. When we are invading enemy territory, brothers and sisters, the more you get involved in the Great Commission, the more you will face flaming arrows from the evil one. You're sitting back doing nothing about the spreading of the gospel of the world, then you're not a problem for the kingdom of darkness. When you start proclaiming the gospel, going to the nations, the ends of the earth with the gospel, you're going to face arrows.

When we're exposing Satan for who he really is. Without going into details, I testify that the last three months have involved different things in my own life that have made it clear that I've been teaching, studying about angels, demons, spiritual warfare. When we repent of a long-held sin pattern or unholy relationship. A couple stops living together, moves out and is honoring God, don't think, "Okay, that means everything is going to be easier." The flaming arrows of the evil one will attack you. Oftentimes, when we pursue righteousness, things are going to get harder, not easier, and when God is preparing us, individually or corporately, for a great work for His glory, when God is about to do something great in and through your life, just know that there are likely flaming arrows that are headed right towards you. There's a bull's-eye on your back.

This is a picture of Elijah right before the prophets of Baal, and he's about to call down fire down from heaven. I love it, 1 Kings 18, right in the middle of the chapter when Ahab comes up to him and says, "You are a troubler of Israel." I love that he was known for making trouble for the kingdom of darkness. Like, don't you just want your face on a wanted poster in hell? "Yes, he makes trouble for us." That's the picture.

The Helmet of Salvation

Okay. Shield of faith. Helmet of salvation. What does that mean? It means victory in spiritual warfare is grounded in a holistic understanding of what it means to be saved. What it means to be saved. What it means to be delivered from sin. When it comes to salvation, we need to remember we have been saved. Scripture talks about salvation in the past tense. We have been saved. We have been declared right before God. This is justification. We have freedom from the penalty of sin. This is – think of how huge this is in spiritual warfare, realizing you are free from the penalty of sin. Free from it, but that's not where we stop in our understanding of salvation. We stop there, and then we say, "I've prayed a prayer, and I'm free from the penalty of sin. I'm going to heaven, and I can live however I want." As a result, we live totally defeated Christian lives when we buy into that false idea of salvation. It's where it starts, not where it stops.

Second, we are being saved. We're working out our salvation. This is the process of sanctification. Freedom from the power of sin. Christ did not just save you to get out of the line going to hell and into the line going into heaven. He saved you for a new life. To walk with Him and enjoy Him and grow in Him, and you're free from the power of sin. Yes, you still struggle, but you have power over sin.

Now, there's coming a day when we will be saved. The Scripture talks about salvation in the future sense, glorification and freedom from the presence of sin when all sin will be gone. What we find is many of our struggles in our Christian lives are rooted back in the misunderstanding of justification, sanctification or glorification. Either we think that we can justify ourselves, and Satan convinces us we can do that, or we think sanctification is optional. "I'm going to heaven. My sin will be tolerated along the way. It's no big deal." Or we think, "I'm never going to get there," and we walk through life defeated and hopeless, because we don't realize that there's coming a day when sin will be totally gone. We press on until that day. Spiritual warfare needs an understanding of all three.

The Sword of the Spirit

Then, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, an offensive and a defensive weapon. It's non-negotiable. Matthew 4, Jesus is tempted three times. Every single time what does he do? He quotes Scripture. Did Jesus have to quote Scripture in order to ward off temptation in Matthew 4? Absolutely not. Jesus was the kind of guy who could say anything at that point, and it would have become what? Scripture. He was that good. So, He quotes Scripture to show us that there's a power in the Word of God in resisting temptation. This is so huge. You want to be victorious in spiritual warfare? Oh, this is so not glamorous. Read the Word. Study the Word. Memorize the Word. Hide it in your heart. Meditate on the Word. Read, memorize and apply. Last one, apply the Word. This is where I'm convinced we have really missed it in a lot of the literature and teaching on spiritual warfare during our day.

Some of most respected teachers in the spiritual warfare movement fight spiritual warfare totally different than what Jesus was doing here. Listen to this account from a respected book that I was reading through. It's a conversation between a counselor, the expert here in spiritual warfare, and a woman whom he's counseling that he claimed was possessed by

a demon. The counselor was talking with her. In the midst of their conversation, suddenly he said the demons interrupted the conversation. So, this is what he wrote in his notes:

The demon suddenly said to me, "Demons don't like you because you tell too much and you talk too much and too many people are getting convinced."
"Too many people are getting convinced of what," I responded.

That's the expert in spiritual warfare,

"We have been at war with you for too doggone long, and we are sick of it."
"Who is we," I demanded. "What do you mean we?" "You know who I am."
Anger flared in the demons.

"What is your name," I said. "Oh, come on." Disgust filled the demon's voice.
"What is your name," I insisted. "You know my name. You named me. You named me the last time I was here. You named me. You named me. So give me my name back." "No, you tell me your name," I persisted. "Oh, shut up," came the not-too-polite reply. I said, "You are under the authority of Jesus Christ. You are to respect Him and His servants. And I want you to confess that you will leave today. I command you to leave by the authority of Christ."

The demon said, "I'll kill her first." He repeated it three times. "You can't stop me from killing her." "Yes, I can. I forbid you to do it." "How?" The demon tried to delay. "Jesus forbids you," I said. "You can't do that," he protested.

What is that about? Can you imagine a story like that in the Gospels or in the New Testament? Jesus' method for dealing with Satan and his minions is a far cry from this bizarre technique. Jesus was faced with three fiery temptations, and He didn't decide to have a dialogue with Satan. He didn't decide to condemn or bind the devil. All He did was hold up the sword or the spear, which is the Word of God, and the devil was gone.

So, this is the picture. This is what the one being counseled needs: someone to share the Word of God with her because it is the power of God in spiritual warfare, not an engaging conversation. Take the sword of the spirit and trust in it. It's the Word of God.

Prayer

Then, we come to the last component, a picture of the armor of God, and it's prayer. It's not attached to a particular item and armor. Luther said, "Prayer is the mightiest of all weapons that created creatures can wield." Prayer is the heart of spiritual warfare. All prayer is ultimately related to spiritual warfare because prayer is our constant communication with our commander-in-chief. We must pray consistently. We must pray intensely. We must pray strategically for specific things.

You look at the New Testament church. This is a summary of the picture of the New Testament church as they were facing spiritual warfare, how they were praying. They were praying to the God who is sovereign over everything in the world. They knew that, and the God who supplies everything we need. I love Acts 17. Let me tell you a secret the early church knew. They knew the secret to seeing the power of God in the church is not found in serving God but in being served by God. Not found in saying, "Here's what we can do for you, God," but found that getting on your face and calling out for God to do what only He could do in and through us was the only effective means.

The New Testament Church prayed because they were utterly dependent on God's power. They knew they could not do it without Him, and they were utterly desperate for God's grace, utterly dependent on His power, desperate for His grace and utterly devoted to God's mission. This is why they prayed. God has given us prayer, ladies and gentlemen, because Jesus has given us a mission.

Sometimes we ask, even as Christians in the church, "Why do we need to pray?" The reality is if we're not on mission, what do we need to pray for? You don't need to pray when you're watching TV or spending all your hours mindlessly surfing the Internet, and you don't need to pray if there's nothing at stake in the way you're living. You're not risking anything for the glory of Christ when your Christianity consists of religious, monotonous routine. Then, prayer is really not needed, but when you are on the front lines, engaging the forces of evil, proclaiming the gospel and pursuing purity and holiness and proclaiming the holiness of God to the ends of the earth, you need prayer. You'll need constant communication with your commander-in-chief.

The New Testament Church prayed when they were gathered together. They prayed when they were scattered apart. They prayed. Gathered together and scattered apart. They prayed for the success of God's Word. "Oh, now, Lord, enable your servants to speak your Word with great boldness," Acts 4, and for the spread of God's worship. This is the heart of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," (Matthew 6:9-10). That is not a declaration. That is not "God your name is holy." That is a request. It is a petition. "God make your name known as holy. Show yourself as holy." This is what we pray. We pray to the ends of the earth, "God show your name as holy in all the world." All of these coming together in the armor of God. This is spiritual warfare.

Warfare at Corinth...

What I did at the end here is gave you just a picture of how these different pieces of the armor of God played out in the way Paul addressed the Christians at Corinth. We're not going to walk through all of those, but I want you to see that we are surrounded by the world, the flesh and the devil, and we fight by standing firm and pressing forward, standing firm and pressing forward with the truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, knowledge of our salvation, the understanding of salvation, the Word of God, and we pray like crazy.

We're about to look at some controversial questions here and think about some of the things that are out there, today. I want to encourage you, before we even go to some of the things that we may not know definitively, that we can camp out on what we do know definitively. In my battle and your battle with spiritual warfare, I want to encourage you to camp out on the things that we just walked through, and let that be your focus. I emphasize that because, well, listen to what one scholar expert on spiritual warfare wrote. He said, "Dealing with territorial spirits is major league warfare and should not be undertaken casually. I know few who have the necessary expertise, and if you do not know what you're doing, Satan will eat you for breakfast."

I want to say to you, as loudly and clearly as possible, that is not true. God's power in spiritual warfare is not confined to experts. It is available to every man or woman who is found in Christ and knows Christ, and when you are in Christ, Christ is in you, and Christ is in God, then Satan is not eating you for breakfast. There is not some technique you need to find. You're not going to turn into toast. You are victorious based on all the things we have just seen in the New Testament.

CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS

What about deliverance ministry?

Controversial questions. Okay, what is the – like, you just shot down all these ideas about deliverance ministry with casting out demons, what in the world? Okay, think about this. What about deliverance ministry? Deliverance ministry, one might add, involves the practice of casting out demons.

Now, I'll be honest, obviously this is not a common practice around here at Brook Hills. On the other hand, I have been in a variety of contexts around the world where this is a common practice. This last year, I spent some time in India, and without going specifically into some of the circumstances that I found myself in, this was a very common thing, and I saw it being practiced in a variety of different ways. I know that there are variety of different situations around the world, and, again, I'm not saying to know all of those experiences, but I want us to think through the truth of God's Word that allows us to think through these experiences. When it comes to examples, clearly beyond any shadow of a doubt, Jesus and the Apostles in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts, we see them casting out demons.

So, based on all that we've seen, what are we supposed to think about casting out demons? Well, first, I think in some of these emphases, there are a number of positives that come from highlights of demonic activity. Deliverance ministries remind us of the reality of the spiritual world around us. Remind us not to forget, not to be engrossed in empty rationalism. Deliverance ministry has challenged the idea that personal problems can be reduced to purely psychological, social, physiological, or circumstantial factors. There's definitely something deeper going on here. There's a battle waging for our souls, and along those lines, deliverance ministries often emphasize prayer and other biblical modes of spiritual warfare.

So, these are good things. At the same time, I do think there are potential problems. One is extremism, going to extremes, much like C.S. Lewis warned against. Fanaticism. Confusion. I think, fundamentally, causing confusion about major issues like the gospel by focusing on minor issues that take center stage. Experientialism: letting experience determine truth instead of letting truth interpret experience, and then blame-shifting. What I mean by that is, "The devil made me to do it," kind of mentality.

There are two main arguments for deliverance ministry, and they're pretty simple. Number one, Jesus and the disciples did it, and number two, the Bible never forbids it. So, do you want to be like Jesus? The Bible doesn't say not to do it. So, unless we're prejudice against the supernatural, then of course, it seems pretty rock solid. Let's engage in this.

When I look at Scripture, and I look at much of the picture that is associated with deliverance ministry, there are two major errors in these arguments for deliverance ministry. First, deliverance ministry advocates often fail to distinguish between moral evil and natural evil, casting out demons in cases of moral evil is something that is not taught or illustrated anywhere in Scripture. What you will find in literature and thinking about the subject in our day is that almost all of deliverance ministry is focused on casting demons out of people in issues of moral evil. There's a whole catalog of demons that need to be cast out: anger, lust, pride, fear, unbelief, and so on and so on, but as we have seen, this is not what Jesus is doing in the New Testament. It's not in the Old Testament, it's not in the Gospels, and it's not in the letters of the New Testament. We don't see it.

Well, we don't have time to go through Acts 8 and Acts 26 here, but the picture is, in response to moral evil, it's not casting out. It's calling people to repent. That's what's going on with Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8. It's the picture of how people were coming to Christ among the Gentiles in Act 26. So, there's a failure to distinguish between moral evil and natural evil, and we've talked about that. Second, often they fail to account for the discontinuities that exist between us and Christ. Now, we've talked about some of the differences between the ministry of Christ and our ministry. Jesus is doing some unique things when He is speaking to wind and waves, calling people to get up and live, taking coins out of fishes' mouths, bringing down food from heaven. He is doing some unique things. He's revealing His identity in the way He's bringing about healings. The thing is He never gives us a command to cast out demons. We've talked about that. Instead, He preaches the gospel, repentance, faith, love. He says nothing about how we need to cast out demons from ourselves or others as we grow in him. The focus was on repentance and faith.

As a result, that just kind of sums up where we were earlier, I would put before us two major cautions regarding deliverance ministry. Number one: There is no direct command in Scripture to do deliverance ministry, even to relieve suffering, but there are numerous direct commands in Scripture to do personal ministry using the Word of God to call people to repent of sin and trust and turn to Christ. Now, the only place that you could go to is Mark 16, which is a whole other evening worth of discussions to have when we talk about snakes and deadly poisons. So, probably not the best text to go to. There's not a command in Scripture to do deliverance ministry, even to relieve suffering, but there are commands everywhere to do personal ministry using the Word of God to call people to repentance from sin and turn to Christ. That was the way of the Old Testament saints, it's the way of Christ, and it was the way the New Testament Church. Repent of sin, turn to Christ, and this is the picture.

I hope, I pray, I'm not trying to simplify things to accommodate a Western worldview that's uncomfortable with this or that, but look at Scripture. Jesus clearly does not put focus on us needing to go out and do this or that, and the New Testament letters from Romans to Revelation don't address this. This is where the New Testament, much like the Old Testament, was not accommodating the cultic worldviews around it. We would think, we would expect there to be more, but there's not, and when we take it there, we may be becoming more pagan in our worldviews than we are biblical.

Second, we must make sure to follow Scripture's emphasis. Now, let me pause real quick, that's not to say that demons aren't real, and that demons aren't in people, and the demons don't need to be cast out of people. That's not what has been said. What has been said is that we're never commanded in Scripture to do this. This is not on the front lines of spiritual warfare. We'll get to that in a second.

Second, we must make sure to follow Scripture's emphasis on personal responsibility, particularly regarding moral evil. When you read different accounts from some counselors that talk about deliverance ministry, they talk about people, like a man or a woman, like they're the nicest, sweetest person in the world, but they are just tormented by this demon of lust or anger or pride, and it's a disconnect. This is the whole point. The problem is not outside; the problem is inside in our hearts, and we need cleansing at the core of who we are. This is the gospel. When we undercut human responsibility for sin, we undercut the power of the gospel. The Bible often talks about our responsibility without mentioning the devil, but the Bible never talks about the devil without mentioning our responsibility. In other words, and the picture there is in James, *"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is*

tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed."

Even when you look at Judas, you see the influence of Satan, obviously, on Judas, but then you come to the picture, the end of the picture there, and Judas was acting here. He was making choices. He was responsible for his sin. Ananias and Saphira, responsible for their sin, and we see over and over in the New Testament that men and women are responsible for their sins. Any ministry that seeks to put responsibility for sin outside of the human heart is missing the point of the gospel. The problem is here: we need to be changed from the inside out. We need to be restored and redeemed from the inside out, which speaking of restoration, this is an interesting thought regarding deliverance ministry. When it comes to deliverance ministry, the only thing the New Testament definitively addresses is delivering an unrepentant Christian to Satan. 1 Corinthians 5:5, *"Deliver the unrepentant, immoral brother over to Satan."* 1 Timothy 1 is same picture.

So, with those cautions then, with those cautions, how do we respond to moral evil? Please hear me. The last thing I want to do is minimize what Satan is doing. He is active. He is involved in tempting us to sin and pull us away and destroy us. I hope that's been clear. He's enticing our flesh, deceiving us. So, what do we do in response to moral evil in our lives and other lives? We recognize Satan's power to influence us morally. He is the lion that is looking to devour us, but at the same time, we need to recognize, focus on our responsibility to repent personally. To cry out for His forgiveness, cry out for His power, take up His words, stand in His righteousness, walk in His righteousness, constantly in prayer. This is spiritual warfare.

What about natural evil? How do we respond when we go into a village around the world, or even here, and someone is the same that they would be – just like in Scripture, and the same way they'd be paralyzed or sick or have a fever, that they are tormented by an evil spirit. Is that possible? Certainly, it's possible. So, what do we do? How do we respond? Remember how Jesus responded when people needed healing? How do we respond when people need healing? What has Christ said that we need are to do when people are sick and suffering? We talked about this a couple of Secret Churches ago. Remember the purpose of healings. God heals in ways that authenticate the gospel. Healings authenticate the gospel, remove hindrance to ministry, and healing is to glorify God.

So, what the New Testament has told us to do, if someone is being tormented by a demon, evil spirit, not talking about a spirit of lust, a spirit of pride, a spirit of – that's gone beyond that, that's moral evil; repent, turn to Christ, but what about a natural evil? Focus on prayer for healings. Pray to God for deliverance from sickness, suffering, and do the same in cases of natural evil and seeming demonic spirits. We pray for healing. This is the picture we even see in Mark 9. Pray for healings. Pray with purpose for healings. Pray for the advancement of the gospel. "God, do this for advancement of the gospel, for success in ministry, and for the glory of God." I have listed examples there.

Pray with purpose for healings and pray with faith for healings. The reality is, James 5, pray with faith. *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* The Kingdom is here. When Jesus healed people, it was a picture. The kingdom of God is here, standing in front of you, and the King, "I have power over these sicknesses." What God does through the power of Christ is, every once in a while, He gives us a foretaste of the Kingdom to come, but realize that the Kingdom is coming. In 2 Corinthians 12, don't miss this, when Satan tormented Paul, thorn in the flesh, did Paul rebuke Satan? Bind Satan? Cast Satan out? He trusted in God. He prayed that God would remove it, but God said, "No." God said, "I have a design for what this messenger of Satan is doing in your life. You can trust me, and you're

going to see that my strength and my grace are sufficient in your weakness.” Paul casting out this demon misses the whole design of God.

So, to summarize, when it comes to deliverance ministry, we do not see a direct command in Scripture to do this. We don’t see a direct command. Instead, we see the New Testament filled with new commands to do personal ministry using the Word of God, to call people to turn and trust in Christ in cases of moral evil. In cases of natural evil, it is commanded for us to pray, to call out to God to bring healing from sickness, suffering, and evil spirits that torment men and women. Pray to God.

Can a Christian be demon-possessed?

Can a Christian be demon-possessed? Most voices in spiritual warfare movement today would say, “Yes. When off the road, a genuine Christian may become possessed, at least to some degree by a demon.” Merrill Unger wrote a book called, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, and he said:

“Who dares to assert that a demon spirit will not invade the life of a believer, in which the Holy Spirit has been grieved by serious and persistent sin, and quenched by flagrant disobedience. A demon enters as a squatter and an intruder, and if the believer fails to walk by faith, he falls into a sin, which if it is not confessed and curbed, may ultimately result in the forfeiture of the Holy Spirit’s power to shield him from demonic invasion. A demon can come in.”

So, what does the Word say about this? Now, some automatically just quibble, “Well, if my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, then obviously, the demon could not live there.” However, that’s really not sufficient because, well, if just because the Holy Spirit is there means the demon can’t be there, and God is only present with His Spirit everywhere, then that would mean demons couldn’t be anywhere. Does that make sense at 12:00 at night?

Okay, so the picture just is – it’s not quite that easy. So, what does the Bible say about demon possession in the Christian? Well, there’s some confusion in terms because demon possession never appears in the Bible. We don’t see that word in the Greek, the word for possession, used attached to a demon’s control over someone. So, many people started using the term “demonized,” being influenced or even overtaken by a demon. So, the question really is to what degree can a Christian come under the influence of a demonic spirit, and the answer is, based on what we’ve already seen in Scripture, the Christian belongs to Christ and is indwelt by the Spirit of God. A demon cannot own a Christian; the issue of ownership is settled in your heart, Christian. A demon cannot own a Christian, and a demon cannot control a Christian.

However, clearly, Christians can be influenced and/or attacked by demons to varying degrees. Obviously, we can be tempted by demons, Acts 5. Obviously, the picture here – Satan has so filled the heart of Ananias that he lied to the Holy Spirit. We’ve talked about 2 Corinthians 12; Saul was tormented by a demon. In Ephesians 4, it talks about how the devil can gain a foothold.

Now, this is where some of that flattening and fragmentation happens because, sometimes, people will take all these different passages, put them next to each other and say, “Okay, this is where it starts.” First, we’re tempted by a demon, and then, if we give into that temptation, then we give a foothold to Satan. Then, if there’s a foothold to Satan, that can develop into a stronghold. Then, if you have a stronghold, then that can develop into possession.

So, we've gone from Matthew 4 to Ephesians 4 to 2 Corinthians 10 to Mark 5 and just put them next to each other and said, "This is how Satan works." It's very common, but it's not a good understanding of Scripture. The picture is, yes, Satan can tempt, torment, influence Christians in many different ways, but Scripture never pictures someone casting a demon out of a Christian, not once. There is no clear example in the Bible where a demon ever inhabited or controlled a true believer, and it needed to be cast out of them. Never once. Christ and the apostles are the only ones we even see casting out demons, and in every instance, they're dealing with unbelievers. Can a Christian be possessed by a demon? Absolutely not.

Should we talk with demons?

So then, should we talk with demons? I've read pages and pages, story after story, listened to different accounts of conversations with demons that people have had here and around the world, and, you know, I came across one that was just totally out there.

"Start working with your higher self and guides, Sananda, the Archangel Sananda, or an ascended master, all you need to do is invite them in, you don't need to know how to formally meditate or channel to do this, just relax in a setting of – or a laying position, and state your intention to work with the angel as you become sensitive to your higher self's energy. You can set up a communication system with them. When you can feel the energy strongly, you can then ask them questions and get responses through their energy."

Now, I don't even know if that's Christian. That's way out there, but it makes me ask the question, "If you start talking about conversations with demons, this or that, stuff that we don't see in Scripture, then where is the dividing line between what we're saying is Christian, and what's way out here over like this?" It's a slippery slope. It's a very slippery slope, and, all of sudden, the way we're talking about spiritual warfare and Christianity is far more pagan than it is biblical. If I can be honest, this is one of the pictures that I think I've seen around the world.

What does Scripture say about conversing with demons? Scripture includes specific commands not to have anything to do with evil spirits or their mediums. Verse after verse that says that. Scripture warns against the danger of addressing seducing spirits, warns against the danger of addressing them. Jesus often demanded demon's silence. He told them to be quiet instead of stay around for a conversation for a while. Most often, Jesus cast out demons immediately. He spoke a word, and they were gone.

So, that's what Scripture does say about conversing with demons. What does Scripture say about naming demons? Should we come for names for demons, like, anger and hate and pride and lust and legion, or Larry or Bob? The New Testament nowhere mentions a strategy for naming evil spirits. Mark 5 is the only proof text people go to for that one. Jesus said, "*What is your name?*" What's Jesus doing here? Is he teaching us the pastoral method for getting demon's names? No. Realize even here, Jesus got a number more than a name. It's not what He's after there. We spent a lot of time bringing a lot of things out of Mark 5:9 that are not there.

What does the Scripture say about binding demons? Matthew 12:29 is a Scripture that is most often used to refer to binding demons, but we've mentioned this earlier. This strong man house binding, the house is the world here, the strong man is Satan, the possessions are people whom Jesus is saving, robbing the devil, and the tying up is the work of Christ.

This is a picture of what Christ has done on the cross; this passage definitively does not teach us to bind evil spirits.

The other two passages people will go to are Matthew 16 and Matthew 18, neither of which are talking about binding evil spirits. They're talking about the community of faith. The passages are both talking about people being either inside or outside of the community of faith, church authority, and church discipline, not spirits being inside or outside of individuals. Total misinterpretations.

What does Scripture say about engaging territorial spirits? Going around the city and region and territory, and calling down spirits. Scripture gives little direct teaching about angelic spirits over cities, territories, regions, or nations. Obviously, we got the picture from Daniel 10, but we never see Jesus, John, Peter, James, or Paul ever attempting to take on a territorial spirit. Never. When you think Jesus would go out into Jerusalem, there's territorial spirits, call them out, get them out of there, dealing with all these cities where churches were being planted, we don't see it.

So, what does Scripture say about conversations in spiritual warfare? I think Scripture is abundantly clear. Number one, pray to God. This is so anticlimactic, but it's not. It's strong. This is where our power is found. Pray in the Spirit on all kinds of occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. This is spiritual warfare: pray, pray, pray. This is what the New Testament church did when they faced warfare. They didn't go out wandering the streets calling out demons and binding them in territories or this and that, they went out proclaiming the gospel. After they gathered together, they prayed, "Help us. Enable us to proclaim the gospel with great boldness." Then, they went out and they gave their lives doing it. That was spiritual warfare.

Pray to God and don't pray to demons. One of the most common phrases in this whole picture of spiritual warfare is "warfare prayer." People who teach during prayer, you should say things like at a prayer rebuke, we break demons' hold on a person, we contain their power, and we eliminate their presence. We say, "In the name of Jesus, I rebuke you, evil spirit. You have no part in this person's life." Where is that in Scripture? Where is that in Scripture? Is a prayer of rebuke biblical? Think about it. Who is the prayer of rebuke addressed to? Demon. Don't pray to demons. Pray to God. Talk to God. You call on the God of the universe, who has authority over all demons, over everything. You don't start throwing the blood of Christ on different things. That is not your prerogative. This is the prerogative of God to apply His blood for the forgiveness of sins. So, we call out to God, we pray to God, not praying to demons. Imagine somebody counseling Job; "I bind this demon in you, Job, this and this and this." No, no, don't forget, this was to fulfill the purpose of God.

I remember in one conference that I was doing, where I was preaching, and something went wrong at the end of the night. We were going to this worship gathering, and it was the climax of the whole deal, and all the power went out. So, everybody went running around, "Spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare. Satan's turned the lights out," and everybody was so concerned. What happened was we ended up having this incredible worship gathering by candlelight. After we finished, the lights came back on. There's a problem when we see spiritual warfare as things that mess up our plans and our programs, and we start attributing everything to this or that, instead of just falling on our faces saying, "God, you're in control of every single one of these details, and I'm going to trust in you. We're going to seek after you. We're going to trust that you're going to bring whatever this is. I don't know how to explain whatever is going on, but I'm going to trust that you're going to use it for your glory." The prayer addresses God, not Satan and demons.

Can we acquire or inherit demons from other places or people?

Can we acquire or inherit demons from other places or people? This one really hit home with me. One author suggested warfare praying for adopted children. He said, "You need to pray over a child that's been adopted. You need to cancel out all demonic working that has been passed onto them from their ancestors. Cancel every curse that may have been put on them." Is there a biblical basis for that with my adopted son? The most common proof text for ancestral spirits is Exodus 20:5, but the simple meaning of this text is that sin has consequences and sin will be judged. Does your sin affect your children? Absolutely, it does. They see sin modeled in you, and they feel the consequences, the effects of your sin, but nowhere in the Bible, nowhere in the Bible is there an example of a Christian who inherits demons from his ancestors. There is a lot of talk about inter-generational, familial spirits. This idea has no direct biblical support.

Does my son from Kazakhstan need warfare prayer? Absolutely not, but he needs prayer from me, day and night, day and night, that he would come to Christ, that he would be drawn to Christ, that he would experience the love and the beauty and the mercy of Christ. I'm going to call out on all occasions, day and night for that, and I'm going to trust that God is not – that there's not something in him that's inhibiting this because something has been passed on to him, but that he has a sinful heart that needs to be redeemed by the blood of Christ. I'm going to pray toward that end.

There's nowhere in Scripture where we see a Christian who inherits demons from his ancestors, is invaded by demons because of former cult practices, is inhabited by demons because of a transfer or transfers, or needs continual deliverance from demons. Some people look at Matthew 12 and say, "Well, if you don't cast the demons out now, then they might come back, and you might have more when they come back." That's not the point in Matthew 12. This is a parable warning that the unrepentant will perish. It's a much, much bigger picture here. Jesus is warning here – warning Israel about final judgment, not warning believers to do periodic self-deliverance to protect against demons coming back.

What if I experience something that's not in Scripture?

So, in light of all that, what if I experience something that's not in Scripture? What if I experience something that's not in Scripture, which we all will. We all will. I know there's probably a variety of things around this room that you're thinking, "Well, I've seen this. I've been part of this. I've sensed this," and, yes, there are real spiritual forces of evil in the realms. The key is how do we respond according to Scripture? My encouragement is to, number one, be open regarding the spiritual world. The last thing I ever want to do is to dull our sensitivity to that which is spiritual by pointing out some of these things.

The spiritual world is real, and at the same time, be discerning according to the written Word. Look at your experiences through the lens of God's Word. This is where I would encourage you to beware of highly charged expectations of demonic manifestations. The reality is intense expectation can produce almost anything. A counselor can find what they're looking for in a counseling situation. A counselor can produce what they want to produce in a counseling situation. People who are looking for demons will find them just as people who are ignoring demons will pretend like they're not there.

One of the things that I've seen in contexts around the world is sometimes there is almost a programmed time where deliverance ministry happens. Someone could be sitting in a worship service, singing praises to God, and then sitting quietly listening to the Word, but then when it comes time for deliverance ministry, demons need to be cast out. We just have to be very, very careful, beware of expectations of demonic manifestations, beware of satanic tactics that divert us from Christ, the gospel, or God's Word. Oh, sorry, I missed

one. Beware of minimizing personal responsibility for sin. We've talked about that. Then, keep the focus on the gospel, and then be confident in the truth and power of Christ revealed in His Word. Be confident in it.

You know, when I started studying for this night, it was about the time we started moving forward here with the Radical Experiment at Brook Hills, and if I could be honest, a variety of weird things started happening. We found ourselves in the emergency room twice in one week due to some pretty unusual things. Heather got a pretty severe infection in her knee. I was sick. To be honest, I've been sick for the last month, and I don't want to divulge information of others, but there are other leaders around me who are facing a variety of different things as well that really seemed unexpected. I'm diving into this literature, and I'm thinking, "Man, I need to start binding and casting some things out. What's going on here? What's causing all this?" I was wrestling with this.

This is where I landed in the middle of it all, Scripture doesn't tell me that I need to discern where this is coming from or why this or that is happening. I don't know if Satan is behind this or that or not, but I do know that not one of the details that has happened to me or anyone else around me over the last few months is outside of the purview of the sovereignty of God. My responsibility is not to cast those things out, bind things from this or that place, or call down this or that spirit. My job is to get on my face, get in His Word, and walk humbly and obediently with God, and trust Him when I go to the ER. Trust Him when I'm sick. Trust Him when the unexplainable happens, and let all these things draw me closer and closer to Him. This is where the battle of spiritual warfare is fought. I've come to the conclusion that determining whether or not it's a demon in the toaster or simply a loose wire is far less important than how I deal with the toaster. Determining what's going on is far less important than how I deal with it.

CONCLUDING CHALLENGES

Look forward to the final battle in this war...

So, ultimately, what are we supposed to do? I know it's late, but you have to get these two challenges. I'll run through them. Number one of two challenges; I want you to look forward to the final battle in this war. Revelation 12 is the picture of Michael the Archangel leading the host of angels to conquer the devil and His demonic army. Listen to what happens:

"The great dragon was hurled down," a couple lines in, "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. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!'"

Ladies and gentlemen, there is coming a day when Christ will be honored as King, and the cry of heaven will be, "The salvation of God is here. Salvation complete." The power of God will be here. The power of the King asserted in full force, and the kingdom of God will be here. The long anticipated reign of Christ, the consummated King of creation will happen forever. Christ is honored as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ will be honored as King; the devil will be cast down in defeat. That ancient serpent of the garden, that great

adversary, the accuser of believers. Brothers and sisters, his accusations will no longer be valid. They will be empty. The accuser will stand accused.

Christ honored as king, the devil will be cast down in hell, and the church is going to rise up in victory – the church, us, those who have overcome. How did they overcome? By the blood of Christ shed on a cross. By the blood of Christ shed on a cross, the accusations of the devil are totally empty. They are empty, and the peace of Christ is eternal, but don't miss this, empty and eternal, don't miss this; *"they overcame by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony because they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."* Victory is obtained by the blood of Christ shed on the cross, ultimately, preeminently, but the picture here is also including the lives of Christians sacrificed in this cause. Get the picture. Men and women, saints of God, who persevered in spiritual warfare. They did not overcome by means of exorcisms, incantations, rituals, or rebuking. They overcame by giving their lives to spread the gospel.

Here's the beauty. These persecuted believers - think about this in light of our brothers and sisters in countries around the world - persecuted believers share in Christ's sufferings, uniting their lives with Christ in such a way that His fate became their fate. Participating in Christ sufferings, but don't miss it, now, in Revelation 12, they are participating, also, in Satan's defeat. I love this. Don't miss this implication. When Satan uses persecution to destroy the life of a believer, he ultimately participates in their eternal delight and in his own eternal destruction. "Persecute believers, see them killed, and one day, Revelation 12, they're going to overcome you. You are going to be hurled down. They are going to experience eternal delight, and you are going to experience eternal destruction. Take that, Satan."

This is why Jesus says to His disciples in Matthew 10, "Don't fear the devil because he can only kill you in this life." What's the worst thing that can happen to you, Christian? If you give yourself to the mission of God, the worst thing that can happen to you is you get killed, and if you do, if you do, then you join a chorus of people enjoying eternal delight, as Satan is cast down. It's a great picture there of Martin Luther. He said,

"As soon as God's Word becomes known through you, the devil will afflict you and will make a real doctor of you, and will teach you by his temptations to seek and to love God's Word. For I myself...owe my papists," those who encountered him, "many thanks for so breaking, pressing, and frightening me through the devil's raging that they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I never should of reached."

I've become a good theologian because of Satan. I love it. Yes. Satan's strategies - people of God, just let it soak in - Satan's strategies to defeat you will only serve to advance the kingdom of God in the end. So, the whole picture of the cross, Satan's strategy to defeat the Son of God, only serves to provide salvation for the sons of men. So, look forward to that battle.

Live now with all you have to bring about the end of this war...

Second, live now with all you have to bring about the end of this war. When is this war going to end? Obviously, only the Father knows the answer to that question, but if you want to see a hint in Matthew 24, *"You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."* It goes on to talk, and I want you to see at the very end of this, Matthew 24:14, *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* Did you catch that? "This gospel of the kingdom is going to be preached in all nations, and the

end will come.” What does that mean? “In all nations, *panta ta ethne*, among all peoples.” Not nations as we depict political boundaries today, this nation, this nation, this nation because it was not the case in that day. This is referring to ethnic grouping of people. It’s the same word that Jesus uses in the Great Commission.

This is the task before us, the purpose of God, the gospel and the glory of God declared in all nations, among all peoples. Now, obviously, we don’t know exactly how a people group, how all nations, all peoples would be described here according to the wisdom of God, but we’ve got guesses, and a lot of folks have worked on how people are grouped and established as best as we can tell, a number of people groups worldwide, 11,690. Out of those people groups, the number of them still unreached with the gospel, unreached meaning they have less than two percent of evangelical Christians, 6,400 of them. 6,400. Number of people groups still unreached and unengaged with the gospel – 5,845. Unengaged means, not only are they less than two percent Christian, but no one is doing anything about getting the gospel to them. There’s no movement going on among those people to get the gospel to them.

Now, obviously, we do not know, for sure, that our definition of people group is exactly the same as what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24, but the picture is clear. I am convinced that this is a verse that Satan has tacked on the wall of hell because it tells him when this is all going to be over. He is fighting to do everything he can to prevent that from happening, because he knows that when the gospel goes to all peoples, the end is coming. What happens when the end comes for Satan? He will be destroyed, cast into the outer darkness like a fire, forever. He is doing everything he can to prevent this gospel from going to all these people groups. This is why I’m convinced, in some ways, Satan is just fine with us spending in our American churches, all of our money and all of our time and all of our energy and all of our resources ignoring unreached peoples, because if we’re ignoring them, then the end is not coming. The end comes when they hear the gospel.

So, church, let’s wake up to the purpose of God, and get this gospel to those peoples. There’s a price there, following Christ to the ends of the earth may cost you everything you’ve got. Satan is prolonging that day as long as he possibly can. If you give your life to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth, you can expect to be met in force by the devil and all the demons of hell. The price will be high. Jesus said it, “You will be hated by the nations.” It will be tough to stand firm. You give yourself to take this gospel of those people groups, it will cost you, dearly, but here’s the promise: Jesus is coming back for His church. He is coming back for His church, and we are going to be a part of a people made up of every language, tribe, and nation. Oh, to see this! Jesus has said to us, “There are people out there that are waiting to hear, and I am drawing them to myself. Take the gospel to them.”

This is where we need to see, when we are doing spiritual warfare, proclaiming the gospel, we’re not going out and trying to get enemy soldiers to defect. There are people, John 10, “I have many people – many more sheep that are not at this fold.” Acts 18 in Corinth, “I have many people waiting in the city.” God has people and is drawing to Himself among the nations, and He’s calling us to take the gospel to them. We’re not causing enemy soldiers to defect out there; we are special forces going after POW’s that belong to God. They belong to this people. They belong when that day when they will be singing the praises of Christ from every tribe, language, people, and nation. So, let’s go to them and look forward to the day when we’ll experience His peace and His presence, forever and ever. The battle will be over, and the victory will be enforced, and the King will finally be given the glory that He is due. That’s what spiritual warfare is about. Look forward to that battle in Revelation 12, and live. Live to bring about the end of this war.

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