

The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

Hello again from Hong Kong. Over the last two weeks, I've been focusing on aspects of what is commonly known as spiritual warfare. A couple of weeks ago, for example, I looked at the differences between appearances and reality. Last week, I discussed Satan's plan for our lives, that's yours and mine, but I've not directly discussed the nature of spiritual warfare. Now, this week I am going to do just that and this will complete a series of three that have had Satan, our enemy, as the main focus. Why? Because it's vitally important in life to 'know your enemy'. Jesus clearly felt we needed to know our enemy and spiritual discernment is a gift that He wants us all to receive and use. Certainly, I have come to understand myself that spiritual discernment is crucial for anyone who wants real peace in this mad world in which we live.

Without this discernment, Christians will have a tough time without knowing why and non-believers will live in a state of deception until the end of their lives when the reality will become evident and result in the type of despair we discussed last week.

Now let's focus upon Ephesians 6:12 which I'm sure, if you've been with me for the past two weeks, will already be very familiar to you. In fact, you can probably say it with me! *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Now, I'm going to refer to this verse shortly as a means of understanding, gaining an understanding of the nature of spiritual warfare, but before I do this, I want to provide you with modern day examples of the work of Satan in this world which will serve to reinforce the truth of Ephesians 6:12.

What I am going to recount first is a World News Daily report from March 13th, 2008

"An American woman who levitated, demonstrated paranormal psychic powers and spoke foreign languages unknown to her was clearly demon possessed, according to a board-certified psychiatrist and associate professor of clinical psychiatry at New York Medical College.

The unnamed woman, with a long history of involvement with Satanic groups, was observed by a team of priests, deacons, several lay assistants, psychiatrists, nuns, some of whom also had medical and psychiatric training, levitating six inches off the ground while objects flew off shelves in the same room, according to Dr. Richard E. Gallagher, who documented the case in the February issue of the New Oxford Review."

Now, what is interesting here is that those suggesting that this woman was demon possessed were from the secular world, the person who is reporting the actual incident

and the person that was there: a board certified psychiatrist and a university professor in clinical psychiatry. These persons are not normally noted for their belief in the supernatural, but they felt compelled to report this as possession given what had been observed.

Now, this is another report, this time from the Washington Post. The mother of Seung Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter, stated that she sought spiritual healing for her angry, troubled son. The head pastor of the One Mind Church in Woodbridge, Virginia, said his church was approached last summer to help deliver this young man from demonic power.

"Members of the congregation met with Cho and his mother," said the Rev. Dong Cheol Lee, minister of the Presbyterian congregation. "His problem needed to be solved by spiritual power," said Lee. "That's why she came to our church - because we were helping several people like him." But Cho had to return to college before any intervention took place."

Now, these are just two examples of what in Ephesians 6:12 are called *'the spiritual forces of evil'*. Let's now take a look at Ephesians 6:12 to get to the central features of spiritual warfare.

First, let's look at the opening to the verse: *'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...'* The emphasis is on the **'is'** in this opening.

The Struggle is Ever Present

This struggle is on-going, it's ever present. This struggle is not a one-time occurrence but is a daily, ongoing, continual warfare, whether we like it or not. The lie of Satan is that we only have to battle here and there, and so we don't need to be discerning at all times. That is a lie and to act on it leaves Christians, and non-Christian alike, vulnerable.

Ask yourself: Do I really believe I am in a persistent, personal and pernicious war? If you don't believe this you're already in trouble! But even if you believe it, you are in jeopardy, unless you act on this truth by walking in a conscious awareness of your need to be clothed with Christ, the armor of light, the armor of the God."¹

The Struggle is not Against People

Spiritual warfare is not about the struggle of man against man. It is not a political struggle, a social struggle, an economic struggle, or even a religious theological-doctrinal struggle. It is not a struggle between human beings. What is the one thing that gives you the most difficulty in life? For most of us, the answer to that question, in one

form or another comes down to one thing and that's **'people'**. You may struggle intensely with a family member, your spouse or child or a parent. Or you may have personality conflicts and struggles in your office, or in your church, or in your neighborhood. (Stedman, R., 1999)

But the apostle Paul, who wrote Ephesians 6:12 says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Our true battle is not against our political opponents or family or co-workers or neighbors or any other human agency. The battle is not against people, but against unseen spiritual powers. In fact, the entire human race is under a vicious assault by certain principalities and powers, world rulers of darkness and wicked spirits in high places. (Ibid)

The word 'against' is used five times in the verse. We have an out-and-out enemy who is actively and aggressively warring against us, assisted by powerful and wicked allies.¹

The second phrase in Ephesians 6:12 refers to the *'rulers...the authorities... and the powers of this dark world.'*

Who are these Rulers, these Authorities, and these Powers of this Dark World?

The best answer I've come across is from a website called gotquestions.org which I can recommend for anyone wanting to know more about the bible and get answers to difficult questions, and this is a direct quote from the website:

"In every place where the phrase appears (in the bible), the contexts make it clear that it refers to the vast array of evil and malicious spirits who make war against the people of God. The principalities and powers of Satan are in view here, powers that wield power in the unseen realm to oppose everything and everyone that is of God."²

And finally we have *'the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'*.

Who are the Spiritual Forces of Evil in the Heavenly Realms?

There's a great deal of debate about this but it helps to know that the King James Version of the bible, thought by many to be the most accurate translation, has 'heavenly realms' as 'high places'. Satan is referred to as the 'prince of the power of the air' in Ephesians 2:2, and with this knowledge the website **battleinchrist.com** says this and I quote:

"Since Satan is the prince of the power of the air, these wicked spirits, in high places, are often understood to be the collective organization of all of Satan's devil spirits.

¹ http://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians_612-13.htm

² <http://www.gotquestions.org/principalities-and-powers.html>

These malevolent spirits work evil and mischief and operate in our atmosphere. They operate as close to the very air we breathe, and reach to realms beyond.”³

To sum up this analysis of Ephesians 6:12, we are all in a spiritual battle here and now, and this battle is continuous and constant. It is not a battle against people although we have to remember that some people are actively in league with the devil, but in the end he will destroy them as he seeks to destroy us, for he has no love for those who knowingly work for him. We are actually battling against **all** the forces of evil, not just some, in the spiritual realm. We have a formidable enemy for whom we are no match if we rely on our natural abilities alone. Make no mistake; this is a battle to the death, yours and my death, if Satan gets his way.

So what do we do when we are Under a Spiritual Attack?

We will definitely be in a spiritual battle, so you and I need to prepare for war! The first step for the non-Christian is to give his or her life to Jesus. Put Jesus in the driver's seat. When that happens, the non-Christian comes under Jesus' protection and He, Jesus, is far more powerful than Satan. When this happens, the approach for the new and existing Christian is the same.

The first thing to do is pray against the attack. Come against it with the full force of the Lord. Command the enemy to leave by the power vested in you as a believer in the all-powerful creator of the universe. Refer to the body and blood of Jesus. Ask to be covered by His blood and to be surrounded by His angels of protection. Learn some key scriptures that speak truth into the situation, and there are a number of them such as Ephesians 6:12, which I guess you know almost by heart now. Act upon these. For example, James 4:7 tells us to submit ourselves. It says 'yourselves': ***Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*** Take that action and keep it up; each time the enemy comes, keep it up. Don't be worn down. Remember the victory is yours so take the battle to Satan by rebuking him: go on the defensive and rebuke his demons in the name of Jesus Christ.

The second thing to do is ask God for discernment. Every attack must be seen for what it is - spiritual warfare. Once you get drawn into natural explanations, the enemy is scoring a victory. A spiritual attack needs a spiritual response! 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 10 tells us that spiritual discernment is a supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, between holiness and evil. It is an essential gift to seek from God and God gives his children good gifts.

The third thing is singing and praise - most important. One of the purposes of praise and worship is to cast out the enemy and bring the Holy Spirit into Church services. It makes good sense to use this weapon in our private battle too. 2 Chronicles chapter 20 verse 22 teaches on the value of singing in the physical world and this is what it says: ***And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the***

³http://www.battleinchrist.com/principalities_powers_world_rulers_of_darkness_spiritual_wickedness_in_spiritual_warfare.htm

men of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir who had come against Judah and so they were routed. Singing and praise are part of God's armoury against his people's enemies. They were effective against the physical forces aligned against his chosen people of Judah and they are equally as effective against the enemy's spiritual attack on God's people now!

Conclusion

So let me conclude. This world is a spiritual battle, and like it or not, we are in the midst of this on-going warfare. In this battle, Satan uses the full force of his demonic powers against us, and while our struggle is not against flesh and blood, he does use people to do his will. Some people knowingly and willingly serve him and, we do have to remember that some people are actively involved in pursuing Satan's agenda. However, they are deceived because whilst they are useful tools for him today, tomorrow he will destroy them! Unlike the Lord, the enemy does not cherish and protect those who serve him.

We must not only realize, but we must also remember that we will never be a match for our enemy without the protective coverage of Jesus Christ. However, with his coverage we have nothing to fear. In fact, to quote Romans 8:37 we will be: *'more than conquerors'*.

I hope you've enjoyed this message today. Once again, this is the time when you will be picking this message up with your house church leader, your fellowship group leader, your virtual church leader and you'll be looking at the essence and exploring some questions, so goodbye for now. God bless you. See you next week.

Reference

Stedman, R. (1999) <http://www.raystedman.org/warfare/warfare1.html>

Discussion Questions

- 1 Some people argue that if we talk about Satan, we give him too much power. What is your view?
2. Does Satan target those in Christian leadership positions or are they given no special attention?
3. In the teaching, the 'rulers...the authorities... and the powers of this dark world.' are described as 'evil and malicious spirits'. What biblical evidence is there for the existence of these spirits?
4. Recognition that demons exist is one thing but what harm do they do?

5. Peter refers to spiritual warfare in these words: 1 Peter 5:8: *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* We often miss the significance of the 'sober mindedness' statement. Why is it important to be of sober mind?

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