

GOD'S PRESENT WORK OF CONQUERING HIS ENEMY AND OURS

Spiritual Warfare Series – Part 2 of 3

Introduction

1. Jesus our Lord has triumphed over all His enemies and is now exalted high in glory. From His throne, God the Father together with His glorified Son continue to wage war against Satan and his evil kingdom, moving constantly towards the great and final day of complete fulfillment.

2. How is God at work TODAY?

a) He continues to work through Jesus, His Son.

Jesus is interceding for His people before God's throne of grace and mercy. See John 17:20-26; Rom.8:34; Heb.2:17-18; I John 2:1.

b) He uses His holy angels.

i) He sends them out to lead and protect His people in the fight. See Ex.14:19; Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43; Acts 27:23-24.

ii) He sends them to fight against Satan's strongholds, principalities and powers in the heavenlies. See Dan.10:12-14.

iii) He is using them to prepare the world for Christ's second coming. See Rev.6-10; 14:6-13; 15:1-8.

c) He uses specially chosen individuals, eg. emperors and leaders of great influence and power. Example: Cyrus. See Isaiah 45:1-7.

d) He uses His people, His church empowered by His Spirit.

i) We, God's people, have a very special and significant part to play in God's work in this age. We are His fighting force here on earth.

ii) This calls for understanding, alertness and wholehearted involvement.

3. God is at work, but so is his enemy. Satan cannot touch Jesus or the holy angels, so he directs his evil influence and schemes towards all people everywhere living in his domain, and in a particular sense towards God's people. See Rev.12:17.

- a) He works to tempt, accuse and attack God's people with enticing deceits, half-truths, distortions of the truth and outright lies in order to trap them, to render them powerless against him and if possible to destroy their earthly bodies. Cf. John 8:44.
- b) He works to penetrate our minds with his lies using two powerful and effective weapons:
 - i) PRIDE, filling our minds & hearts with all forms of subtle proud thoughts (i.e. deceiving us with lying thoughts about how superior and important we are or who we will be even as one of God's "super-apostles"), and
 - ii) DESPAIR, filling our minds with negative thoughts, accusations, fears of failure, inferiority, rejection, utter worthlessness or hopelessness (i.e. deceiving us with his lies about how little, insignificant, hopeless and useless we are).
- c) Both of these are rooted in absolute lies though most of us easily believe and fall for his lies. The Word of God teaches us to be renewed in our minds and to think of ourselves in the light of God's truth. Cf. Rom.12:2-3.
- d) Our only basis for standing against Satan's destructive lies is the truth of God. Our warfare then is a "truth encounter" -- destroying Satan's lies with the truth of God. cf. Eph.6:14,17; Heb.4:12; Matt.4:3-10.

4. Satan's work against God's servants is often successful. Often we aren't able to help others because we ourselves are in his grip -- deceived

and trapped. Therefore, if we are going to be effective in helping to set others free, we need ourselves to know what it means to be personally free and to walk in it daily. This freedom is found in God's truth as the only true weapon to destroy the lies of the enemy. See John 8:32; Gal.5:1.

5. The fight is on and as God's servants, we are preparing ourselves here to fight and to win. There are:

a) Some very basic, foundational truths that we need to know and hold on to, and

b) Preparations we need to make -- if we are going to be ready for the battle.

A. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS WE NEED TO KNOW & BELIEVE

1. One of the most important truths for God's people to grasp is who we are. As God's holy and dearly loved people (Col.3:12), we are hidden with Christ in God. See Col.3:3-4; John 14:20.

2. This privileged relationship is, firstly, expressed in the phrase "in Christ". eg. Eph.1:3-10. The truth found in these two words contains the KEY to our experiencing Christ's victory. It speaks of the POSITION from which we do our fighting and attacking of the enemy's strongholds. What does it mean, especially in relation to spiritual warfare?

a) "In Christ" means that we have already died with Christ, and may now enjoy freedom from Satan's control and from Satan's condemnation and accusation. See Rom.6:17-18; 8:1,33; I John 2:1-2.

b) "In Christ" also means that we have been already raised with Christ, and therefore may live without the fear of death and Satan's former

power over death. See Col.3:1; Rom.8:10-11; I Cor.15:54-57; II Cor.2:14; Acts 26:18.

- c) "In Christ" also means that we have been seated spiritually with Christ in the heavenlies where Christ now reigns in victory over all Satan's kingdom. We may today reign with Christ in the heavenlies over the Satan's evil forces. See Rom.8:29; Col.3:1; Eph.1:18-21; 2:4-6.
- d) Standing confidently "in Christ", clothed in His righteousness, we may enter the conflict with true authority to rout the enemy and do battle for the glory of the name of our Commander-in-chief, King Jesus.
- e) "In Christ" is our position and our protection/covering. We can choose to step outside of this covering and expose ourselves to the evil attacks of the enemy in ways that will bring harm and destruction, eg. going to places where we deliberately place ourselves within the evil influence of satanic powers.

2. Secondly, this relationship of active "field service" is expressed in a second key phrase: "through Christ". This phrase refers to our role as God's INSTRUMENTS in being God's fighting force on the battle field. See John 14:9-12; Phil.4:13.

- a) "Through Christ" implies that we as individual believers are sent forth to engage in spiritual warfare against satanic strongholds -- not in our own strength or power but in God's supernatural power and might. God wills that we see His battle against the enemy NOT as a work that we have to do for Him, but as the work that HE does through us. Our place is simply to make ourselves available and to prepare ourselves for the fight daily.
- b) "Through Christ" also means that we do not go forth to fight in our own name or in the name of a particular missionary society. Rather we

fight and demolish strongholds "in the name of our Lord Jesus" (eg. Acts 16:18). This is NOT to be thought of as a "magical formula" that we Christians can use just as we wish. This rather speaks of our conviction that it is Christ in us working through us who in fact does the work of defeating the enemy. Our place is to release the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ to conquer the enemy.

3. Thirdly, we need to lay hold of the truth found in the phrase: "for Christ". This phrase speaks about the GOAL of our involvement in God's battles. See Rom.11:36; cf. Is.43:7.
 - a) God's soldiers may never boast about their victories over Satan. See Luke 10:18-20.
 - b) We are not to look for booty for our own benefits or praise in our battles against Satan's kingdom. Rather our delight is to present our trophies of grace to our King for HIS praise and glory. Taking Satan's captives for Jesus and delivering people from Satan's grip must always be done from the motivation that Christ will receive the honour and praise from the lips of these freed slaves and that they will join with us in praising and serving Him. See Rom.15:15-17.

B. PREPARATIONS WE NEED TO MAKE

1. Before we can be effective in fighting the forces of darkness in the spiritual conflict on any level, we must be prepared. In fact, God Himself is involved in this whole preparation phrase or process. He trains His people us so that they will be effective warriors to carry out His plans against the enemy.
 - a) Soldiers do not go straight on to the battle front. They spend time beforehand in disciplined training lest on the battle field, they would be

easy prey when the enemy attacks. Jesus our Commander knows exactly the training we need.

- b) Aims of God's training program for His soldiers:
 - i) To toughen His soldiers through trials and sufferings. We must expect and anticipate God's bringing tough trials at times into our lives. He is training and toughening us for the battle front. Examples: Joseph (Gen.37-50); Paul (II Cor.4:7-12; 6:3-10).
 - ii) To prepare His soldiers through smaller skirmishes for larger battles, i.e. using our own personal struggles against the world, the flesh and the devil to ready us for involvement in much larger conflicts against the enemy. Remember, however, I Cor.10:13. This means that we must take seriously what God allows to happen in our daily lives and not wish them away in a hurry as struggles or trials that have no value or meaning. Examples: Moses' taking care of his father-in-law's sheep, Joshua training under Moses' leadership, David's fighting against lions & bears (I Sam.17:32-37).

2. It is also OUR responsibility to prepare for conflict. We will fall on the battle field and suffer loss (also bringing dishonour to the name of our Commander) if we try to engage in spiritual warfare without preparing ourselves.

What must we do DAILY to prepare for the conflict?

- a) Keep throwing off every sin & "weight". See Heb.12:1-3.

No soldier can fight with deftness and swiftness if he is carrying about heavy weights. And those weights in our lives are SIN.

Examples:

- i) We need to stand firm against Satan's attacks upon us using our fleshly desires. See I Tim.6:11; II Tim.2:22. We cannot play around with sin and then go out into spiritual conflict.
 - ii) We must put off our love for the world. See I John 2:15-16. How can any soldier fight against the prince of the world when he is still in love with the world's system opposed to God?
 - iii) We need to throw off all the sins of the past, eg. sins that we have never truly brought to the light and confessed to God.
 - iv) We need to continually put off "secret sins". See Ps.19:12.
 - v) We need to deal radically with "sins in the camp" that disable the whole army of God. See Joshua 7; I Sam.2:12ff;4:1-11; I Kings 8:33f.
- b) Keep studying God's Manual for Warfare.
- i) This is God's Word. We need to study it so that we are aware of (alert to) the real situations we face in life's battle-fields and also how we are to fight.
 - ii) God calls us to study the Word ourselves (individually) -- seriously, diligently, as a eager disciple/learner, and together with God's people -- receiving the instruction of His servants and also the teaching that comes through "teaching one another". See Col.3:16; Eph.5:19.
- c) Keep in close contact with Command Headquarters.

We could say that our Lord Jesus in heaven is our Commander-in-Chief at the Command Headquarters and His Spirit is our Field Commander. It is our personal responsibility to keep listening to them to receive instructions for daily conflict with Satan.

Example: Jesus -- Luke 5:16; Mark 1:35. cf. Matt.6:13; 26:41.

How does this work?

- i) Through prayer we receive encouragement and strength for the fight, protection for ourselves and others, wisdom and discernment and courage.
- ii) Through prayer we can help our fellow-soldiers in the fight. eg. leaders of God's people, other soldiers on the front line of conflict. (cf. JO Fraser.)
- iii) Through being continually filled with the Spirit, that is, giving ourselves over to the control of God's Spirit to lead and direct our lives. See Gal.5:16,25. cf. Jesus -- Luke 3:21-22; 4:1. Whatever the need for the moment of conflict, eg. boldness, perseverance etc. is available for us through God's Spirit. Our part is simply to ask and we will receive this help.

d) Keep making sure our battle-dress is on.

See Rom.13:14; Eph.6:10-17; I Thess.5:8.

Take note:

- i) God Himself has provided this battle-dress. See Eph.6:11.
- ii) Before us, Christ wore this armour. Therefore, we are to put on His battle-dress: truthfulness, righteous living, peace, faith & faithfulness, salvation/relying totally on God's help, God's trusty "sword" - His living, spoken Word, and love. (See Eph.6:10-17 & I Thess.5:8.)
- iii) Our battle-dress is to be put on daily (i.e. we are to make sure that it's on before we go out into the conflict!) as Satan is very cunning and is watching for unguarded areas.

e) Keep our body and mind under strict disciplines.

A soldier learns to bring himself under control. He cannot keep old habits of life when he engages in warfare. See II Tim.2:3-4.

This means for us:

- i) God requires us to have mastery or control through the help of His Spirit over our body (self-discipline related to sleep, exercise, eating, sexual desires etc.), our minds (what we read and see), our emotions and our wills. Satan will have little difficulty in making us a "prisoner-of-war" if we treat such issues lightly and then try to go on to the field of battle. cf. I Cor.9:24-27.
 - ii) Above all, we must surrender our whole beings to God. We need to understand the inter-relatedness between our spiritual walk & relationship with God and what we do with our bodies and lives. See Rom.12:1; I Cor.6:19-20.
- f) Keep & stay alert for enemy approaches & attacks.
See Matt.26:41; I Peter 5:8-9. cf. Col.4:2 (note the military term Paul used).

This implies:

- i) We make ourselves aware of the strategies & tactics often used by the evil one both through a study of God's Word as well as through study of helpful Christian books, eg. The Fight (John White), The Adversary (Mark Bubeck), I Believe in Satan's Downfall (M. Green), Born for Battle (A. Matthews) etc.
- ii) We enter each day knowing that Satan is not asleep but rather hard at work. When we anticipate his subtle attacks from different directions (from inside Christ's family as well as from outside), then we will not be knocked down in shock or discouragement.
- iii) When we enter each day's battleground clothing ourselves with the mindset of a soldier prepared to fight for our King, then we have nothing to fear. God fights for us. See Ex.15:1-6; 34:11; II Chron.20:17. God also works to alert us before an attack. But most importantly of all, He is our Shield and our Stronghold, our Defense and our Fortress. He is committed to fighting for us and defending us so that we will stand strong and not limp into

heaven with scores of battle-scars. In Him, we can place our confidence and then advance into each and every battle-scene knowing that we won't be fighting alone but along-side the One who has already won His battle.

- iv) He has promised that if we overcome in our battles, then we will be blessed in this world, but also receive the crown of life and righteousness. See James 1:12; II Tim.4:6-7; Rev.2:11, 17,26-28; 3:5,12,21.

Graham Roberts
OM's Missionary Training School
Czech Republic
Sept. 12, 1997