

AGGRESSIVE WARFARE IN EVANGELISM

Spiritual Warfare Series – Part 3 of 3

Introduction

1. Believers are called to God's fight against His enemy and ours both on a personal level, but also on a much wider scale. God doesn't only want us to be engaged in our own personal battles but also in an aggressive offensive against the spiritual forces of the kingdom of darkness.
2. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance that we make ourselves available to God to fight with Him to rout our enemy and His. We are to see ourselves not just as "children" (nestling close to Jesus as little children do on their daddy's knee or sitting on His lap!) but as men and women of God (cf. I Tim.6:11), a fighting force who are ready to do exploits for our Captain and Commander. cf. Col.1:28-2:5; 4:12-13. cf. I Chron.12.
3. What is God's strategy for using us, His people, in this offensive dimension of spiritual warfare? How are we (personally and collectively) to do spiritual warfare against Satan's strongholds and bring captives to Christ as trophies of grace? (cf. Standing defensively in readiness against Satan's attacks on us.)

A. THROUGH A CLEAR PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

1. Firstly, through bearing a clear witness to the light of the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. See Matt.4:23; Acts 1:8; II Cor.4:1-6; Acts 26:18.
2. This means:
 - a) As the truth (i.e. "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ") is proclaimed or witnessed to, God's Spirit works to demolish strongholds in the minds and hearts of unbelievers, opening their eyes to the truth. cf. II Cor.10:3-5.

b) As long as Satan can keep his slaves and the people of his kingdom ignorant of the truth, his kingdom remains unthreatened. But wherever and through whomever God's truth about Jesus is proclaimed, there is an invasion of the darkness of ignorance by God and His truth in order that captives might be won for Christ.

B. THROUGH TAKING OUR GOD-GIVEN AUTHORITY OVER SATAN'S FORCES

1. Secondly, through God's people exercising their God-given authority in the name of Jesus (cf. Luke 10:17-19) over the forces of the kingdom of darkness.

2. Note the following facts:

a) Jesus exercised this ministry throughout His earthly ministry. He cast out evil spirits with authority and they submitted to His word. They could not stand against Him. (See many examples in the Gospels, eg. Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:18-19, 33-37; 9:1-2)

b) Jesus gave the authority to His disciples to set captives free as a part of their evangelistic ministry. See Matt.10:1.

c) Paul and the other apostles also continued this ministry of Jesus after He returned to heaven. See Acts 16:16-18.

d) It is indeed a ministry that some of us will encounter as we share the Good News in the CIS and Central Europe. We need not feel afraid of it. We are God's fighting force and God is our Commander fighting alongside us. It is not a ministry only for the so-called "experts" in spiritual warfare. It is a ministry that God's people need to prepare for. One thing, however, that is very important -- we must not enter into this kind of spiritual attack on the strongholds of Satan in another person's life by ourselves. We must go into battle together with God's people with whom we are one in spirit and heart. The key is always to advance against any evil spirits on the basis

of the finished work of Christ in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus. Jesus has committed His authority to us, and so we can fight and keep on fighting until Satan's hold is broken in that person's life. Be careful of extremes: either of running from such people in fear, or of chasing after this kind of ministry out of a sort of curiosity or fascination for Satan and evil spirits.

C. THROUGH THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. Thirdly, through God's people exercising their God-given spiritual gifts, eg. I Cor.12:4-11.

2. Things to note:

a) Spiritual gifts are like "power tools" which God gives His people in order that they can accomplish His work effectively and powerfully.

b) God will give to some members of the body of Christ such gifts as "discerning the spirits" or "healing those under Satan's bondage" (cf. Acts 10:38). We can use these as powerful instruments to aid the spread of the Gospel.

c) We must see that not only certain gifts (i.e. those that are often treated with greater interest today) but all spiritual gifts are in fact God's power tools to speed the advance of the Gospel to the nations, eg. gifts of evangelism, teaching, mercy etc. Take time to think through how the gifts God has given you relate to evangelism through the church.

D. THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION

1. Fourthly, through exercising our God-given ministry as intercessors on behalf of those without the Gospel, of those engaged in the work of the Gospel and of the church, God's chosen instrument to do evangelism. cf. Epaphras -- Col.4:12-13.

2. Consider:

a) Consider Paul's example: Eph.1:15-19; 3:14-21; Phil.3:3-6; II Tim.1:3-4 etc. He also asked the early church believers to stand with him and his co-workers through their prayers, eg. Eph.6:18-20; Col.4:2-4; II Thess.3:1-2; Rom.15:30-32.

b) Consider also the prayers of God's warriors in other parts of the Bible, eg. Ex.32:7-14; 33:12-23; Psalm 91; Neh.1:4-11.

c) What we are talking about here isn't just some quick, heartless prayers or petitions but aggressive praying -- that is, praying that is full of faith in God and His victory, that exalts the victory of Christ, and that asks God to do BIG things in His battles against Satan. A question to ponder: Is there any Biblical reference to praying against Satan and his kingdom?

d) Learn from the example of other servants of God, eg. J.O. Fraser, John Hyde, David Brainerd etc.

e) Learn to understand how to pray a warfare prayer for the conversion of an unbeliever. For example, the following prayer is taken from Thomas B. White's book, The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare, pp.123-124. "Father, I bring to you my burden for (name). I claim him or her for salvation. Lord, it is your desire that (name) not perish. Holy Spirit, make Jesus known to (name). Stir within this person the desire to seek salvation and convict him or her of sin. Lord, soften any resistance to the truth, and plant seeds of the word in this person's mind and heart. Lord, break his or her will. Make this person desperate. Bring (name) to the end of himself or herself. Lord, I ask you to break Satan's power in (name)'s life. Spirit of Jesus, silence and subdue the voice of the enemy. In the authority of Christ, I weaken any strongholds in (name)'s life. Holy Spirit, move in your power to separate away from this person the influence of unclean spirits, and stir him or her to repentance. I bind the power of any spirits of confusion and unbelief that blind the mind. Lord, enable him or her to hear your Word with clarity. Send someone to share a word of testimony."

E. ENGAGING IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE WHILE EVANGELISING

1. In the preparation phase ("before"):
 - a) Get our lives in order -- with God and with one another, confessing any known sin that would give Satan a foothold and an opportunity to weaken our witness and our message. cf. Eph.4:27.
 - b) Study the truths of God's Word that we are going to share. Know the Gospel message, and be ready to give an answer to anyone concerning the faith we profess. See I Peter 3:15. Understand the lies that Satan is spreading and how to help people through the truth.
 - c) Pray and intercede:
 - i) For yourself
 - ii) For your fellow-team members.
 - iii) For the people you will meet and witness to.
 - d) Ask others to pray for you and with you.
 - e) Resist Satan's work in your own heart and mind. cf. James 4:7.
 - f) Prepare your heart and mind. Put off fear, recognising that it is from the enemy and will also spread to discourage other members of the team (cf. Deut.20:8). Put off pride also, and unbelief. In their place, put on courage, humility and faith/trust.
2. In the witness/proclamation phase ("during"):
 - a) Keep in close prayer contact with God throughout your time of ministry. Ask for wisdom and discernment, for the right approach, help with the suitable words & language, for a deep revelation of the truth of Jesus and for a genuine love for the people (cf. II Cor.5:14).

b) Guard against lying thoughts that the enemy will place in your mind. Take such thoughts "captive" (II Cor.10:5).

c) Drive home the message with Holy Spirit conviction -- simply, clearly, authoritatively and humbly. See I Thess.1:4-5.

d) Take authority in the Spirit in the name of Jesus our Lord against any confusion, interferences and interruptions. Resist, stand, fight -- don't let Satan have the upper hand.

e) Keep fighting against unbelief and fear, especially when from the outward appearance the success of the work seems to be suffering. Keep putting on belief, courage. Learn to rejoice in God's victory even before it becomes evident to our eyes.

3. In the follow-up phase ("after"):

a) Pray on. Ask God to guard the seed that has been sown (cf. Mark 4:15. Pray for a strong spiritual hunger and thirst; also for the entrance of the Word into their minds and hearts (eg. as they read a brochure or book we've given out -- cf. Ps.119:130). Pray for those who have believed that God will give them perseverance in the faith.

b) Stand guard against Satan's tactics of discouragement and defeatism (cf. Elijah -- I Kings 19:1ff).

c) Keep pressing the Word home to the hearts of the people. Just one visit and one sharing the truth may not be enough. Keep sowing the seeds of the Gospel. Keep returning to share more of God's truth.

d) Be ready for any strong satanic resistance to the work of the Gospel we've been engaged in, eg. some form of rejection or persecution from government officials, various pawns of Satan including family members such as parents who fear their children's being taken off by some sect etc. Take authority over the works of darkness

and refuse to allow any of Satan's intimidating tactics to win over your determination to fight on for the triumph of Christ in the lives of people you are witnessing to.

Conclusion: Learn more about fighting God's battles by fighting. And God will use you mightily as one of His warriors -- for His glory.

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